

---

# Linguistic Expressions of Sexism In Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs

Hellen Lynder Manyobe, Joseph Maina, and Rose Mavisi

Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya/ Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Taita Taveta University

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjel.2013/vol14n12338>

Published July 11 ,2026

---

**Citation:** Manyobe H.L., Maina J., and Mavisi R. (2026) Linguistic Expressions of Sexism In Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs, *British Journal of English Linguistics*, 14(1),23-38

---

**Abstract:** *This article examines the linguistic expressions of sexism in traditional love and nuptial folk songs of the Basamia community in Busia County, Kenya, and their possible implications in constructing, reinforcing, and transmitting gender ideologies within marriage and social relationships. The study focused on how linguistic choices embedded in Basamia oral performances shape perceptions of femininity, masculinity, marital expectations, and gendered power relations. It adopted the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) framework developed by Michelle M. Lazar, which examines how discourse produces, sustains, and challenges gender inequalities within social and cultural contexts. The study employed a qualitative discourse analytical research design. Data collection involved observing Basamia cultural performances, recording songs, interviewing cultural custodians, and analyzing traditional oral materials. Twenty-five traditional Basamia love and nuptial folk songs were purposively selected to guide the systematic categorization and analysis of linguistic expressions of sexism. After Samia's transcription and translation into English, the songs were examined using FCDA, focusing on how specific expressions conveyed expectations around marriage, womanhood, and masculinity. The data analysis procedure involved a systematic interpretation of song texts to establish how linguistic expressions reflect culturally constructed gender relations and marital expectations within the Basamia speech community. The analysis showed that the selected Basamia songs constructed femininity and masculinity through repeated cultural expressions, particularly those related to marriage expectations, family responsibilities, and social recognition. The songs employed evaluative language, metaphorical expressions, symbolic imagery, and directive statements that associated women with beauty, obedience, patience, fertility, emotional endurance, and domestic responsibility. In contrast, masculine identities were commonly linked to authority, leadership, provision and decision-making. The analysis demonstrated that sexist language in Basamia songs frequently operates subtly through culturally accepted forms of praise, advice, and moral instruction rather than explicit discrimination. The study recommends continued preservation of Basamia oral traditions while encouraging interpretations that recognise changing understandings of gender roles.*

**Keywords:** sexist language, feminist critical discourse analysis, Basamia songs, gender ideology, nuptial songs, oral literature, linguistic expressions

---

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays a significant role in constructing social meanings, transmitting cultural values, and shaping human relationships. It is not merely a neutral system of communication but a social practice through which identities, ideologies, and power relations are created, negotiated and maintained. Fairclough's (2015) view of discourse as a social practice provides a basis for examining how language carries social meanings. Lazar's (2007) feminist approach further connects these meanings to gender relations. Examining linguistic choices provides insight into the cultural beliefs, social values, and power relations embedded within a community.

The relationship between language and gender has received considerable attention within feminist linguistic scholarship. Spender (1980) argues that language may reproduce patriarchal structures by privileging particular social experiences while limiting how women are represented. Lakoff (1975) demonstrates that linguistic practices can reveal underlying assumptions about gender roles, while Cameron (2005) observes that ideas about femininity and masculinity are continuously reinforced through repeated patterns of communication. This suggests that sexist language is not limited to direct insults or openly discriminatory expressions, but may also occur in ordinary, socially accepted forms of interaction.

Traditional oral literature provides a space for examining the relationships among language, culture, and gender because oral forms preserve and communicate social knowledge. Finnegan (2021) observes that African oral traditions, including songs, narratives, and ceremonial performances, serve as essential channels through which communities transmit beliefs, values, and social expectations across generations. Okpewho (1992) notes that oral literature reflects the experiences, philosophies, and social organization of African communities. Through performance, repetition, and audience participation, oral genres become powerful instruments for maintaining cultural memory and shaping social behaviour.

Music occupies a particularly significant position in African cultural expression because it functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of communication and education. Bebey (1969) explains that African music is deeply connected to everyday life and reflects social relationships, communal experiences, and cultural practices. Nketia (1974) further argues that African musical traditions communicate social values by addressing themes of morality, identity, and community responsibilities. In the Kenyan context, Akuno (2005) observes that music contributes to the construction of social identities by transmitting cultural expectations and meanings.

Songs performed during marriage and courtship ceremonies are especially important because they communicate ideas about relationships, gender responsibilities, and family life. Studies of African wedding songs indicate that these performances often provide instructions on acceptable social behavior while simultaneously reflecting existing gender arrangements. Kathuru (2012) notes that wedding songs may contain gendered messages that influence perceptions of men's and women's roles within marriage, Kobia and King'ei (2009) demonstrate

that traditional songs function as cultural spaces where communities communicate expectations about gender and social responsibility.

Among the Basamia community of Busia County, Kenya, love and nuptial folk songs form a part of their oral tradition. These songs are performed during courtship practices, bridal preparations, dowry negotiations, wedding ceremonies, and other marriage-related events. They act as communal texts through which knowledge about love, marriage, respect, sexuality, responsibility, and family relationships is shared. Musungu (2010) explains that Samia marriage music represents cultural values and social experiences surrounding marriage practices. Basamia nuptial songs offer a rich source for examining how language constructs ideas of femininity and masculinity.

Existing studies among Luhya communities have demonstrated that music shapes gender identity and social expectations. Aketch and Oyoo (2019) observe that musical expressions among the Luhya reflect cultural understandings of gender roles and relationships. Anyango (2014) shows that songs within Luhya communities can reveal how men and women are represented through language and performance. Oloo (2014), in a linguistic analysis of Lusamia songs, further demonstrates that traditional songs may contain gender stereotypes that influence perceptions of social roles.

African feminist scholars have also emphasized the importance of critically examining cultural expressions without dismissing their social value. Ogundipe (1994) explains that African cultural texts may preserve communal identity while also reflecting expectations surrounding gender and social organization. Mama (2001) also argues that cultural practices can reproduce power relations when particular roles become accepted as natural. This analyzes oral traditions, which are vital for understanding how gender meanings are created and maintained.

Although previous studies have examined African oral literature, music, and gender representation, many have concentrated on themes, performance functions, and cultural significance rather than the specific linguistic mechanisms through which sexism is encoded. Limited attention has been given to how lexical choices, metaphors, symbolic representations, evaluative expressions, and directive language construct gender identities within Basamia love and nuptial songs.

This article examines linguistic expressions of sexism in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. It identifies and categorizes the linguistic features through which gender meanings are created, and shows how oral traditions function as cultural spaces where ideas about femininity, masculinity, and social power are produced, maintained, and sometimes challenged.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study adopted Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), developed by Michelle M. Lazar, as the theoretical framework. In applying FCDA, this article considers Basamia marriage songs as cultural discourse in which ideas about gender, power, and social expectations are expressed through language. The framework is founded on the assumption that language is not a neutral medium of communication but a social practice through which identities, cultural beliefs, and social relationships are constructed, maintained, and transformed.

According to Lazar (2005), Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis investigates how gender inequalities are produced, reproduced, negotiated, and challenged through discourse. The approach extends Critical Discourse Analysis by placing gender at the center of inquiry and examining how patriarchal ideologies are embedded in everyday language practices, social interactions, and cultural expressions. Through this perspective, discourse is viewed as a site where meanings surrounding femininity and masculinity are continuously created.

In this article, FCDA was useful because the selected Basamia songs repeatedly present certain expectations of men and women. These repetitions were examined to understand how ideas about acceptable masculine and feminine behaviour are culturally maintained. Societies develop beliefs about appropriate gender behaviour through continuous exposure to particular forms of communication. These repeated representations gradually become accepted as normal ways of understanding gender roles. Analysing discourse makes it possible to uncover the hidden assumptions and ideologies that influence how communities define men's and women's positions within society.

This theoretical perspective was appropriate for analyzing Basamia love and nuptial folk songs, as the songs function as cultural discourse. Within the Basamia community, songs performed during courtship, bridal ceremonies, and marriage celebrations do not merely entertain participants but also communicate expectations regarding love, marriage, family responsibilities, and social behavior. Through repeated performance, these songs become a channel space where ideas about womanhood, manhood and acceptable gender relations are transmitted from one generation to another.

FCDA further recognizes that gender inequality is not always communicated through direct discrimination or openly negative expressions. Lazar (2007) explains that patriarchal power may operate through ordinary discourse, including cultural traditions and positive representations that appear natural, desirable, or socially beneficial. This perspective was important because many expressions in Basamia love and nuptial songs function as praise, advice, appreciation, and moral guidance. A deeper linguistic analysis shows that within the Basamia context, some of these expressions may reinforce gender expectations by associating ideal femininity with obedience, patience, sacrifice, emotional endurance and domestic responsibility.

The framework was also useful in examining the different ways masculine and feminine identities

---

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development–UK

are linguistically represented in the selected songs. While some expressions construct women through beauty, morality, fertility, and marital responsibility, others associate masculinity with authority, provision, leadership, and decision-making. FCDA provided a basis for examining how these representations contribute to broader understandings of gender relations within the Basamia cultural context.

The study applied FCDA by examining specific linguistic elements, including lexical choices, evaluative expressions, metaphorical constructions, symbolic representations, naming practices, directive language, and patterns of agency. These linguistic features were analyzed beyond their literal meanings, considering the cultural values and gender ideologies they convey. For instance, words of praise were examined not only as compliments but also in relation to the expectations and social roles attached to such descriptions. FCDA views discourse as a space where dominant ideas can be both maintained and challenged. Lazar (2020) emphasizes that discourse not only reproduces unequal power relations but can also create opportunities for resistance and transformation. This aspect enabled the examination of Basamia songs as complex cultural texts that preserve traditional values while also providing spaces where certain gender expectations may be questioned, criticized, or renegotiated.

Through this framework, the analysis approached Basamia love and nuptial folk songs as meaningful forms of social communication in which gender identities, cultural expectations, and power relations are constructed. FCDA provided tools for identifying how linguistic expressions in the songs contribute to the reproduction, negotiation, and possible transformation of gender ideologies within the Basamia speech community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative research approach guided by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis was used. The approach was appropriate because the objective focused on interpreting meanings, examining linguistic choices, and understanding how language in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs constructs gender identities and social expectations.

The study was conducted among the Basamia community of Busia County, Kenya. Data collection involved observing Basamia cultural performances, recording songs, and engaging cultural custodians knowledgeable about traditional marriage songs and their meanings. Twenty-five Basamia love and nuptial folk songs were purposively selected based on their relevance to marriage practices, gender representation and cultural instruction.

The selected songs were transcribed from Samia language and translated into English for analysis. During translation, attention was given to preserving cultural meanings, symbolic expressions, and contextual interpretations, as some expressions in oral traditions convey meanings beyond their literal translations.

Data analysis was conducted using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Lazar

---

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development–UK (2005). The procedure involved systematic identification and categorization of linguistic expressions of sexism within the selected songs. The analysis examined lexical choices used to describe men and women, evaluative expressions that communicate social approval or criticism, metaphorical and symbolic representations of gender identities, directive expressions that communicate expected behavior, and agency patterns that reflect power relations.

The analysis interpreted linguistic expressions not only by their literal meanings but also by the broader cultural ideologies they represented. This enabled the examination of how Basamia love and nuptial folk songs construct, reinforce, and sometimes challenge perceptions of femininity, masculinity, and gender relations within the community.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Linguistic Expressions of Sexism in Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs**

Linguistic expressions refer to the specific ways in which language choices communicate meanings, attitudes, beliefs, and social relationships within a particular discourse. According to Fairclough (2015), language choices are never socially neutral because they reflect and reproduce particular ways of understanding society, identity and power relations. Lazar (2005) argues that linguistic expressions operate as vital sites where gender ideologies are produced, normalized and sometimes challenged through everyday discourse. Within feminist linguistic studies, attention is given not only to what language communicates explicitly but also to the hidden cultural assumptions carried through words, metaphors, descriptions and patterns of representation.

In relation to gender discourse, Mills (2008) explains that sexism in language may occur through linguistic choices that position men and women differently within social structures. Such expressions may appear ordinary or culturally acceptable while still reinforcing unequal expectations regarding gender roles and behaviour. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis was used to identify linguistic expressions within Basamia love and nuptial folk songs that communicate ideas about femininity, masculinity, marriage expectations, and social responsibilities.

The analysis focused on lexical choices, directive expressions, metaphorical constructions, symbolic representations, naming practices, and patterns of agency within the selected songs. These linguistic elements revealed how Basamia oral traditions function as cultural texts through which gender meanings are transmitted, reinforced, and negotiated within marriage discourse.

### **Lexical Choices in Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs**

Lexical choices refer to the selection of particular words and expressions that speakers use to convey meanings, attitudes, and social values. According to Cameron (2005), vocabulary choices through repeated descriptions attached to men and women influence how societies understand masculinity and femininity. The analysis revealed that Basamia love and nuptial folk songs employ

---

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development–UK  
 evaluative lexical choices that construct socially accepted images of womanhood, especially through descriptions associated with beauty, respect, patience, domestic responsibility, and marital commitment.

In the song *Nomulayi Ko*, the expression “*Nomulayi ko, Omukhasi ow’etsisoni*,” translated as “*She is truly good, a woman with dignity*,” suggests that positive evaluative vocabulary is used to construct an ideal of femininity. The lexical item *mulayi*, meaning “good,” presents the woman as admirable and socially acceptable, while *ow’etsisoni*, meaning “respectable,” associates feminine identity with dignity and proper behaviour. Although these expressions appear complimentary, they reveal how women’s social value is linked to culturally approved expectations of conduct within marriage.

The same song further states “*Omukhasi omanyire emirimo*,” translated as “a woman who knows work.” The phrase connects ideal womanhood with labour, responsibility, and service within the household. The emphasis on women’s ability to perform duties suggests that domestic competence is treated as a measure of feminine value. Through such lexical choices, femininity is represented through caregiving, responsibility, and contribution to family stability.

The line “*Arinda abaana bulayi, arinda munju khobulemeefu*” translates as “She cares for the children well, she keeps the home peacefully,” constructs women as primary caregivers and protectors of domestic harmony. The verbs used in the expression position the woman as responsible for maintaining family order and emotional stability. From an FCDA perspective, such linguistic patterns demonstrate how positive descriptions can also reproduce unequal gender expectations by presenting domestic responsibility as primarily feminine (Lazar, 2007).

Lexical construction of feminine beauty was also evident in *Esilai*, where the expression “*Omukhana wa dala ari luyoo*,” meaning “*The real bride is beautiful*,” emphasizes physical attractiveness as a marker of feminine identity. The adjective *luyoo* (“beautiful”) functions as a positive evaluation that celebrates the bride; It also shows how women’s worth within marriage discourse may become connected to appearance and public admiration. A similar pattern appears in *Ang’enang’ena* through the phrase “*Omundu namubona ni yekomba*” translated as “Whoever sees her admires/desires her.” The expression constructs femininity through external evaluation, as the woman’s value is defined by how others perceive and admire her. The repeated emphasis on being seen and admired suggests that feminine identity is partly shaped through public approval and social recognition.

These lexical patterns demonstrate that Basamia love and nuptial songs construct femininity through culturally valued qualities such as beauty, respect, hard work, and responsibility. The analysis also points out that positive descriptions may reinforce restricted gender expectations by repeatedly associating ideal womanhood with domestic service, emotional regulation, and marital success rather than broader forms of identity and agency.

### Directive and Imperative Expressions in Basamia Nuptial Songs

Directive expressions are linguistic structures that convey instructions, requests, expectations, or commands addressed to an individual. They influence behavior by indicating which actions, attitudes, or responses are considered acceptable within a particular social context. In Basamia, love and nuptial folk songs, commanding words were commonly used during marriage-related performances to provide guidance on expected behavior in marriage. The analysis revealed that these directives were frequently addressed to women, particularly brides, and emphasized patience, emotional control, endurance, and responsibility.

In the song *Guma Busa*, the expression “*Guma busa mwana mukhana*” translated as “Just persevere, young woman” functions as a direct instruction to the bride. The verb *guma* (“persevere/remain strong”) carries an imperative meaning because it instructs the woman on the emotional attitude she is expected to adopt in marriage. The phrase presents endurance as a quality of womanhood and prepares the bride to tolerate challenges that may arise within marital life.

The addition of “*mwana mukhana*” (“young woman/daughter”) identifies the intended receiver of the instruction and that the message is specifically directed toward feminine behaviour.

While Perseverance is presented as a positive moral value, and the linguistic structure shows that responsibility for emotional strength and marital continuity is largely placed upon the woman. The directive does not simply encourage resilience but also constructs patience and sacrifice as expected qualities of an ideal wife.

A similar construction is evident in *Nyiranga Omwoyo*, where the expression “*Nyiranga omwoyo*” translates as “Strengthen your heart” or “harden your heart” symbolically instructs the bride to prepare emotionally for marriage. The phrase uses the heart as a representation of feelings, tolerance, and emotional stability. Through this expression, marriage is presented as a journey that requires psychological preparation, especially for the woman entering a new household.

The command in “*Nyiranga omwoyo*” expects women to develop emotional endurance and remain composed when facing difficulties. The linguistic emphasis is not only on entering marriage but on developing the ability to withstand challenges. Through repeated performance, such expressions contribute to the social understanding that a respectable wife should demonstrate patience and emotional control.

The song *Burera* also shows how directive language is used to regulate behaviour. The expression “*Burera mbulire*,” translated as “Keep quiet so that I may hear,” functions as a command associated with silence and controlled speech. The directive *burera* (“keep quiet”) positions silence as an expected response within the interaction. In the context of marriage preparation, such expressions communicate values of respect, listening, and humility.

The repeated association of silence with appropriate feminine behavior demonstrates how language can shape gender expectations. The expression suggests that a woman's ability to listen, remain calm, and control speech is valued within marital relationships. Through a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this reflects how ordinary instructions may carry deeper cultural assumptions about acceptable feminine conduct.

Directive meanings are also reflected in *Kenda Kala Kala*, where repetition emphasizes continuity and persistence. The repeated instruction encourages the bride to remain committed despite possible challenges within marriage. Repetition strengthens the message because oral traditions rely on repeated structures to make cultural values memorable and influential among community members.

The linguistic patterns found in *Guma Busa*, *Nyiranga Omwoyo*, *Burera*, and *Kenda Kala Kala* demonstrate that directive expressions function beyond simple advice. They operate as mechanisms of social instruction by defining expected behaviour within marriage. While the songs preserve cultural teachings concerning commitment and responsibility, they also reveal how women are frequently positioned as the primary maintainers of patience, emotional balance, and marital harmony.

### **Metaphorical and Symbolic Expressions in Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs**

Metaphorical expressions involve using language in which one idea is represented by another to create deeper meanings and associations. Symbolism similarly involves the use of images, objects or expressions to represent wider cultural beliefs and values. In Basamia love and nuptial folk songs, metaphors and symbols were commonly used to convey ideas about beauty, value, marriage, and gender expectations.

In the song *Ang'enang'ena*, the expression "*Ang'enang'ena nga esali munyanja*," translated as "*She glitters like a shell in the lake*," conveys femininity through imagery of brightness, beauty, and attraction. The comparison between the woman and something shining constructs her as precious and admirable. The metaphor creates a positive image of the bride by emphasizing her attractiveness and the honour associated with her presence during marriage celebrations.

The metaphor also indicates how female identity is often represented through appearance and external admiration. The woman is positioned as someone who is observed and appreciated by others, suggesting that beauty becomes an element through which femininity is evaluated. The symbolic connection between women and physical attractiveness, therefore, functions both as praise and as a reflection of gender expectations within the cultural context.

Another example occurs in *Bhona Esikwada*, where the expression "*Bhona esikwada rachari*" ("See the white calabash") uses an object as a symbolic representation. The calabash, in many African cultural contexts, represents value, usefulness, and continuity. By associating the woman with this image, the song presents her as valuable within the institution of marriage.

The adjective associated with whiteness further conveys meanings of purity, admiration, and social worth. Although the image elevates the woman, it also represents femininity through qualities associated with preservation, beauty, and social approval. The metaphor reflects the complex ways in which language can celebrate women while simultaneously defining the qualities society expects of them.

In *Ngonanga ni Mbara*, the expression “*Arikhweba eing’ombe*,” translated as “*She is being exchanged with cows*,” conveys symbolic meanings related to bride wealth and marriage negotiations. The reference to cattle reflects traditional marriage practices in which bride wealth symbolizes relationships between families. Linguistically, the structure positions the woman as the recipient of an action rather than the performer.

The phrase carries deeper implications concerning agency and gender positioning. While bride wealth is culturally significant as a symbol of respect and family connection, the wording reflects how women may be represented as subjects within social exchanges controlled by others. The symbolic association between women and exchange value reveals how language reflects wider cultural understandings of marriage relationships.

Metaphorical and symbolic expressions within the songs play a major role in constructing gender meanings. They preserve cultural imagery and communicate appreciation, but they also reveal underlying expectations regarding beauty, purity, marital value, and gender roles within Basamia society.

### **Naming Practices and Gendered Identity Construction in Basamia Love and Nuptial Folk Songs**

Naming practices refer to the ways individuals or groups are identified, labelled and represented through language. Names and descriptions used within discourse are significant because they influence how people are socially positioned and understood. In gender discourse, naming patterns may reveal the values, expectations, and identities associated with men and women within a particular cultural setting. Mills (2008) observes that linguistic representations of men and women often reflect broader social assumptions about gender roles and relationships.

In Basamia, love and nuptial folk songs used naming practices to communicate social identity, belonging, and expected responsibilities within marriage. The analysis revealed that women were frequently identified through their relationships with families, communities, and marital roles. These descriptions reflected the communal nature of marriage while also showing how female identity was often connected to relationships with others.

In the song *Otwemerere*, the expression “*Omukhana we Sigalame otwemerere*” translates as “*Daughter of Sigalame lead us*” and connects the woman to her family and community identity. The phrase “*Omukhana we Sigalame*” identifies the bride through her relationship to her place of origin and lineage. This naming pattern recognizes her background and acknowledges the family's collective role in marriage arrangements.

The use of “*otwemerere*” (“lead us”) gives the woman a visible role within the ceremony by positioning her as the central figure of the performance. The reference to her through family association also reflects the way women’s identities within marriage discourse are often relational. The bride is celebrated not only as an individual but as someone representing her family, community, and future marital responsibilities.

Generational identity and the transmission of feminine expectations are further demonstrated in the song *Boyanga Nga Waboyanga*. The expression “*Omwana aboyere wa ng’ina Mudoriko*” translated as “The girl is dressed up like her mother from Mudoriko” and “*Aketchi aboyere wa ng’ina Ganga*” translated as “Aketchi is dressed like her mother from Ganga” demonstrate how female identity is connected to maternal models and inherited cultural expectations. The repeated expression “*Boyanga nga waboyanga*,” meaning “Dress yourself as she dressed herself,” uses comparison to present womanhood as something learned and reproduced across generations. The linguistic emphasis on dressing and imitation celebrates continuity among women while also showing how ideas of respectable femininity are transmitted through repeated cultural practices.

A similar pattern appears in songs where women are repeatedly described using terms such as *omukhasi* (“woman/wife”) and *omukhana* (“girl/daughter”). These lexical labels carry important cultural meanings because they represent different stages of feminine identity. The movement from *omukhana* to *omukhasi* symbolizes the transition from daughterhood into marriage, showing how language marks changes in social expectations and responsibilities.

Although these naming practices preserve cultural recognition and belonging, they also demonstrate how femininity is frequently connected to marriage progression and family roles.

Through repeated performance, such descriptions reinforce the idea that the main stages of female identity are closely linked to marital status and relational responsibilities.

### **Agency Patterns and Gendered Power Relations in Basamia Nuptial Discourse**

Agency refers to how language represents individuals as actors who perform actions or as participants who receive actions performed by others. In discourse analysis, examining agency is important because grammatical choices reveal how responsibility, authority, and power are distributed among different social groups. Within gender discourse, patterns of agency may show whether men and women are represented as decision-makers, leaders, or passive participants.

The analysis of Basamia love and nuptial folk songs revealed differences in the linguistic positioning of men and women. While women were frequently associated with emotional responsibility, patience, and family maintenance, masculine identities were often connected to authority, decision-making, and social leadership.

In *Ngonanga ni Mbara*, the phrase “*Arikhweba eing’ombe*” translates as “She is being exchanged with cows” and depicts how grammatical structures influence gender representation.

The woman is positioned as the participant affected by the action rather than as the person controlling it. The expression reflects traditional bride wealth practices where marriage involves negotiations between families.

The linguistic arrangement of the phrase is significant because it emphasizes what happens to the woman rather than what she actively does. Although bride wealth within the Basamia community represents respect, appreciation, and family connection, the structure of the expression also reflects how women may be positioned within decisions controlled by wider social systems.

The construction of feminine identity through social recognition is also evident in the song *Ludalo Lwae*. In the expression “Aketchi yengire nesambo. Ludalo lwae,” which translates as “Aketchi has come with dignity. It is her day,” lexical choices present the bride as a respected figure within the marriage ceremony. The phrase “*ludalo lwae*” (“it is her day”) positions the bride as the centre of communal attention and public celebration.

The recognition expressed in the song is closely connected to the transition to marriage. The lexical expression “*yengire nesambo*” (“has come with dignity”) associates ideal femininity with respectability, proper conduct, and social approval. “*Aketchi yengire noluyali*” (“Aketchi has come with praise”) reinforces the idea that women receive communal honor when they successfully fulfill culturally valued expectations regarding marriage. The repeated verb “*yengire*” (“has come”) symbolically represents movement into a new social identity where womanhood is recognized through marital acceptance.

The song *Wakhadeka* also shows how evaluative language constructs feminine identity through communal recognition and approval. The repeated phrase “*Ee wakhadeka Nabwire khwebasa*” translated as “Eh, you have done well Nabwire, we thank you” functions as a direct expression of praise directed toward the bride. The lexical item “*wakhadeka*” (“you have done well”) presents the transition to marriage as an achievement worthy of public appreciation.

The expression “*khwebasa*” (“we thank you”) introduces a collective voice that positions marriage as a communal event rather than an individual experience. The use of the collective “we” demonstrates how the bride’s actions are evaluated in relation to wider family and community expectations. The naming expression “*Omukhana we Ganga*” (“daughter of Ganga”) reflects relational identity construction because the bride is identified through family and community belonging. Although the song celebrates the bride, it also shows how feminine recognition is closely connected to fulfilling culturally approved expectations of womanhood.

Through Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, these agency patterns demonstrate that gender meanings are not only communicated through direct statements but also through subtle grammatical arrangements that determine who acts, who decides, and who carries responsibility within social relationships.

## **Humour, Criticism and Resistance in Basamia Gender Discourse**

Although several linguistic expressions in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs reinforce traditional expectations surrounding femininity and masculinity, the songs also create spaces where certain behaviours and gender practices are questioned. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis recognizes that discourse not only reproduces dominant ideologies but also provides opportunities for negotiation and resistance (Lazar, 2020).

Humor and indirect criticism were used in some songs to comment on unacceptable behavior. Rather than confronting individuals directly, Basamia oral performances often use playful language, exaggeration, and communal participation to address sensitive issues related to relationships and marriage.

The use of criticism within such songs demonstrates that Basamia oral traditions are not one-directional systems that only instruct women. They also provide opportunities for questioning behaviours that threaten family and social harmony. This shows the dynamic nature of oral literature, where cultural values can be preserved while certain actions are challenged.

The presence of both reinforcement and criticism demonstrates the complexity of Basamia love and nuptial songs. While some expressions associate women with patience, beauty, and domestic responsibility, other performances reveal that gender expectations are continuously discussed and negotiated within the community.

The analysis established that linguistic expressions of sexism in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs are communicated through various language features, including lexical choices, directive expressions, metaphors, symbolic imagery, naming practices, and agency structures. These linguistic elements shape understandings of femininity and masculinity by communicating culturally accepted expectations surrounding marriage and social relationships. The songs operate as significant cultural texts that preserve Basamia heritage while also revealing how language participates in constructing gender ideologies.

## **FINDINGS**

The purpose was to investigate how linguistic expressions of sexism in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs influence the representation of femininity, masculinity, and marital expectations within the Basamia community. To understand how language shapes gender meanings in these oral performances, the analysis examined linguistic features such as lexical choices, evaluative expressions, metaphors, symbolic representations, directive expressions, naming practices, and agency patterns found in selected traditional songs.

The findings showed that Basamia love and nuptial songs used evaluative lexical choices and descriptive expressions to communicate culturally accepted images of men and women. Expressions found in songs such as *Nomulayi Ko*, *Burera*, and *Ang'enang'ena* portrayed women

through qualities associated with beauty, respectability, patience, responsibility, and suitability for marriage. These linguistic choices celebrated women's roles within Basamia culture but also influenced perceptions of ideal femininity by linking women's value to appearance, obedience, domestic responsibility, and the fulfillment of expected marital roles.

Metaphorical expressions were common in the songs. For example, images such as the shining shell and white calabash represented the bride as valuable and admired, while also showing cultural expectations attached to feminine identity. Symbolic expressions in songs such as *Esilai*, *Bhona Esikwada*, and *Ang'enang'ena* associated femininity with beauty, purity, admiration, and value. Although these representations elevated women within marriage ceremonies, they also positioned women as subjects of social evaluation. Masculine identities, in contrast, were frequently communicated through expressions associated with authority, provision, leadership, and decision-making.

Songs such as *Guma Busa* and *Nyiranga Omwoyo* featured a strong presence of directive expressions, especially those that guide brides on patience and endurance. Songs such as *Kenda Kala Kala* and *Otwemerere* used instructional language to emphasize emotional strength and commitment. These expressions encouraged resilience within marriage but also revealed that women were more frequently positioned as responsible for maintaining emotional stability and marital harmony.

The analysis further showed that naming practices and agency patterns contributed to the representation of gender roles and power relations. Women were commonly identified through relational positions connected to family, marriage, and domestic responsibility, whereas men were represented through action-oriented roles associated with leadership and household authority. Songs such as *Wakhadeka* and *Ludalo Lwae* demonstrated how linguistic choices reinforced traditional expectations surrounding masculine responsibility and feminine obligation.

The songs also contained elements of cultural continuity and gender socialization. Through repetition, comparison, and intergenerational references, songs such as *Boyanga Nga Waboyanga* demonstrated how expectations surrounding femininity were transmitted through communal practices and relationships between older and younger women. This showed that Basamia oral traditions function not only as forms of entertainment but also as spaces where cultural knowledge, identity, and gender expectations are preserved and communicated.

The analysis established that linguistic expressions in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs significantly shape how gender roles are communicated and understood. The use of evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, directives, symbolic language, and agency patterns preserves Basamia cultural knowledge while also revealing how oral traditions shape perceptions of femininity, masculinity, and power within social relationships.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined linguistic expressions of sexism in Basamia love and nuptial folk songs by exploring how language choices within traditional marriage performances communicate gender meanings and social expectations. Guided by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the study demonstrated that Basamia songs function beyond entertainment, serving as cultural forms of communication through which ideas about femininity, masculinity, marriage, and social responsibilities are transmitted across generations.

The analysis of linguistic features within the selected songs demonstrated that lexical choices, evaluative expressions, metaphors, symbolic representations, directive language, naming practices, and agency patterns play a major role in shaping gender perceptions. These linguistic elements presented women through qualities associated with beauty, respectability, patience, emotional strength, and commitment to family responsibilities. In contrast, men were commonly associated with authority, provision, leadership, and decision-making roles. Although these representations reflect cultural values within the Basamia community, they also reveal how language may reinforce socially accepted expectations regarding appropriate roles for men and women.

The study further demonstrated that sexism within Basamia love and nuptial songs is often expressed subtly through culturally acceptable forms of communication rather than through direct negative descriptions. Expressions of praise, advice, and moral instruction were found to preserve communal values while sometimes positioning women within limited expectations connected to endurance, domestic responsibility, and marital success. Masculine representations reflected traditional assumptions concerning power, responsibility, and social authority.

The analysis also revealed that Basamia oral traditions should not be interpreted solely as instruments of gender inequality. While some linguistic expressions maintain patriarchal ideas, the songs also provide opportunities for reflection, criticism, and negotiation through indirect commentary and communal participation. This demonstrates the dynamic nature of oral traditions as spaces where cultural meanings are preserved but can also be questioned and reconsidered.

In conclusion, Basamia love and nuptial folk songs operate as powerful forms of discourse that preserve cultural heritage while influencing understandings of gender relations. The study emphasizes the importance of critically examining indigenous oral traditions, not to diminish.

their cultural significance, but to understand how language shapes social beliefs and to encourage interpretations that support more inclusive representations of gender identities.

## REFERENCES

- Aketch, M., & Oyoo, S. (2019). Gender roles and musical expression in the Luhya community of Kenya. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 31(2), 123–139.
- Akuno, E. A. (2005). *The role of music in the construction of gender identities among the Luhya of Western Kenya*. Kenyatta University.
- Anyango, B. F. (2014). *Gender presentation among the Abakhayo in Ongidi's songs* [Master's thesis, University of Nairobi]. University of Nairobi Repository.
- Bebey, F. (1969). *African music: A people's art*. Harrap.
- Cameron, D. (2005). Language, gender and sexuality: Current issues and new directions. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(4), 482–502. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/ami027>
- Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Finnegan, R. (2021). *Oral literature in Africa* (2nd ed.). Open Book Publishers.
- Kathuru, M. I. (2012). *Gender bias in the language of wedding songs: A case study of wedding songs in Magumoni Division, Tharaka Nithi County* [Master's thesis, Kenyatta University].
- Kobia, J. M., & King'ei, K. (2009). Gender roles in initiation songs of the Igembe people of Kenya. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 6(4), 1–15.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.
- Lazar, M. M. (2005). *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a feminist discourse praxis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(2), 141–164.
- Lazar, M. M. (2020). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating feminist discourse praxis. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 17(4), 424–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1761103>
- Mama, A. (2001). Challenging subjects: Gender and power in African contexts. *African Sociological Review*, 5(2), 63–73.
- Mills, S. (2008). *Language and sexism*. Cambridge University Press
- Musungu, J. (2010). *Cultural music composition: The creation of Esidialo: A Samia marriage* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa]. UNISA Institutional Repository.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1974). *The music of Africa*. W. W. Norton.
- Ogundipe, M. (1994). *Re-creating ourselves: African women and critical transformations*. Africa World Press.
- Okpewho, I. (1992). *African oral literature: Backgrounds, character and continuity*. Indiana University Press.
- Oloo, P. A. (2014). Gender stereotyping in Lusamia songs: A linguistic analysis. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(7), 222–230.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man-made language*. Routledge.