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**The (Mis)Representation of  
Algerian Women in Proverbs  
-The Case of Proverbs in the Western Towns-**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master Degree in “*Linguistics*”

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## Dedication

*To my family,  
and to those who believe in me.*

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## **Abstract**

One of the most influential oral products in any society is the proverb. The latter has been the concern of sociolinguists for the fact that it has linguistic, social and cultural dimensions. The present dissertation sheds light on proverbs about women originated in the western towns of Algeria. It aims at revealing how the image of women is painted through investigating the perceptions and attitudes of West Algerians towards the negative and positive portrayals of women in the proverbs of their region. The researcher works on a corpus of twenty (20) proverbs about women. The collected proverbs are sociolinguistically analyzed. Moreover, a questionnaire is selected as a research instrument that investigates the attitudes of west Algerians towards proverbs that portray women. The informants are Algerian intellectuals of different ages and sexes. After the qualitative and descriptive analysis, the results have indicated that women are stereotypically portrayed more negatively, yet some social roles – like the mother- are respected in proverbs.

**Keywords:** Proverbs, West Algeria, Portrayals, Attitudes, Mis/representation.

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## List of Phonetic Symbols

### Consonants

Manner	Symbols	MSA Examples	English
Plosives	/b/	/bajt /	House
	/t/	/tamr /	Date
	/d/	/dubb/	A bear
	/t̪/	/t̪ama:t̪em/	Tomato
	/d̪/	/ d̪avʔ/	Light
	/k/	/kam/	How much?
	/q/	/qalb/	Heart
Fricatives	/f/	farah/	Joy
	/s/	/sirr/	Secret
	/z/	/zawdz/	Pair/ husband
	/ʃ/	/ ʃaʔʔ/	Evil
	/dʒ/	/ dʒabal/	Mountain
	/ʂ/	/ ʂabr̪/	Patience
	/ʁ/	/ ʁi :ra/	Jealousy
	/ʕ/	/ ʕa :m/	A year
	/ħ/	/ ħulum/	Dream
	/h/	/haram/	Pyramid
	/ø/	/ øaʃlab/	Fox
Nasals	/ð/	/ðiʔb/	Wolf
	/ḏ/	/ḏi ll/	Shadow
Nasals	/m/	/ma:ʔ/	Water
	/n/	/na:r/	Fire
Lateral	/l/	/lail/	Night
Flap	/r/	/riɖʒl/	A foot
Approximates	/w/	/warda/	Flower
	/j/	/jadd/	A hand

### Vowels

Length	Symbols	MSA Examples	English
weak	/ə/	/korsi/	A chair
Short	/æ/	/ʒmæɫ/	A camel
	/i/	/jæ ʒ ri/	To run
	/ʊ/	/juxru ʒ/	go out
Long	/æ:/	/særwæ:l /	Trousers
	/u:/	/fu:l /	Bean
	/i:/	/ bxi:l /	Mean
	/oe/	/lloe h /	Wood
Diphthongs	/aɪ	/ʃ am/	Ugly
	/aʊ/	/dauʁæ/	Dizziness
	/eɪ	/bxεɪr/	well

## General Introduction

The proverbs about women are fairly typical all across the cultures. There is a lack of positive things to say about women. The same question arises each time, does it matter what the proverbs say? “The wisdom of many, the wit of one” as the traditional definition of the proverb might be reflecting male fears, jealousy, and misconceptions about women. Hearing that “*woman is the root of all evil*” can be simply accepted as truth in different communities due to familiarity, convention and cultural trust.

However, folklore scholars today question the appropriateness of the proverb’s message. The interests in women’s issues have prompted an examination of the treatment of women by proverbs. Our attitude towards women, shared by both men and women, may have been partially or fully shaped by some negative proverbs. Portrayals in proverbs can contribute to men’s maintaining superiority and women’s accepting subordination and ridicule.

Unarguably, proverbs do not belong to a particular point of time, and they are always seen as a heritage from the past, take for instance the proverbs of Abderrahman El-Madjdoub that dates back to the sixteenth century (Morocco and West Algeria). However, the fact that these proverbs and saying belong to the past does not mean necessarily that they no longer have an impact on our present or in the future. On the contrary, this may give them a bigger influence on people’s mentalities as well as their behaviours especially if this oral heritage is looked at as the wisdom of our ancestors.

This dissertation attempts to discuss how gendered ideology is discursively framed in some sexist proverbs selected from West Algeria. It also attempts to show how social and cultural threads draw roles, statuses, and identity of women in the West Algerian proverb. To achieve such objectives, the researcher raises the following questions:

- To what extent do proverbs about women, used in the Western towns of Algeria, still play a part in painting woman's image in society?
- What are the perceived attitudes towards the portrayal of women in cultural proverbs in the Western Algerian community?

It is hypothesized that:

- Proverbs used in the West Algerian towns are more likely containing more dismissive voice against women and explicitly promoting domestic violence against them.
- Cultural proverbs may no longer have a real impact in shaping woman's image but sexist proverbs still exist in the western Algerian community.

The corpus of the study is twenty (20) proverbs about women collected from formal and informal resources. The collected proverbs will be presented, explained linguistically and socioculturally, and discussed. These proverbs cover a number of themes about women and the roles they are expected to perform in the Western Algerian community. To check Algerians' attitudes towards the women in proverbs, a questionnaire will be conducted. The target population of this questionnaire is Algerian intellectuals of different ages and both sexes (ten 10 informants). The qualitative and descriptive approach will be used in the present research.

The study consists of three chapters. The first one is devoted to reviewing proverbs, their classifications and functions as well as sociolinguistic aspects. The second chapter provides the methodological framework of the study. It describes the corpus that will be analysed, the participants that will share their attitudes towards some proverbs. and the analysis framework. The last chapter discusses the findings and present the major attitudes that Algerians have towards the West Algerian proverbs which represent women positively and negatively.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## ***THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK***

## **Introduction**

We often encounter proverbs in our everyday lives in oral communication and in diverse written works. These lexical units in a way or another connect individuals with their ancestors and transmit their values and knowledge. They contribute certain stability and a sense of identity as every individual is provided with something that they can hold on to or rely upon, but at the same time, they retain unique character to a particular nation in regard to the whole world. Accordingly, proverbs as the items of folklore deserve a respectful study. The present chapter attempts to define the proverb, identify its function and provide some of its characteristics.

### **1. Defining the Proverb**

The fact that proverbs exist in many cultures and languages is undeniable, however, their currency and importance may vary from one nation to another. For many Arabo-Islamic societies, the use of proverbs in daily speech is more frequent compared to other societies, as there is quite a consensus that they are important devices that reflect cultural wisdom and fluency. Many attempts have been made to define proverbs. There are many definitions of these phenomenal figures, but scholars are still unsatisfied. While much has been written on what a proverb is, it is also important to know what a proverb can do.

A proverb can be defined as short homely statement that attempts to teach a lesson or give practical piece of advice. We often find a sort of rhyme and meter to draw attention and a binary structure, which raises a problem in the first clause, then solves it in the second. Most proverbs contain humour but that humour, particularly when the subject is women, can be bitter, satirical, and even macabre (Stevenson and Waite, 2011, p.241). In addition, there are proverbial comparisons (As fussy as an old maid) that have a fixed traditional form but contain no moral advice; proverbial phrases which permit variations in person, number, and tense;

proverbial similes: (A man without a wife is like a fork without a knife); and proverbial metaphors: (A widow is a boat without a rudder). All of these forms capsule an everyday experience, both of the originator of the proverb and of the one who uses it (Kerschen, 1998, p.3). Herein a number of definitions are provided to narrow down the perception of a proverb. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that different definitions necessarily are due to different criteria to assess the concept of a proverb.

According to both of Concise Oxford Dictionary (2011), and Oxford Dictionaries (2014, online) a proverb is “a short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or a piece of advice”. However, this concept is defined in details in the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) in which a proverb is “a short pithy saying in common and recognised use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all”. (Stevenson and Waite, 2011, p.242)

In one of the most widely used of those basic reference works appears the following definition of the proverb as "a sentence or phrase which briefly and strikingly expresses some recognised truth or shrewd observation about practical life, and which has been preserved by oral tradition, though it may be preserved and transmitted in written literature as well (Holman and Thrall, 1972, p.335). However, it can be utilised and codified by literature. The proverbs are ultimately a product of oral tradition rather than the written tradition, and thus one should turn to that definition given by folklorists. (Clarke and Clarke, 1966, p.89)

Taylor (1994) believes that “the proverb is an invention of the individual who uses ideas, words and ways of speaking that are generally familiar. Because he does so, his sayings win acceptance and circulate in tradition” (p.8). This is an evidence how these sayings become easily memorable forms and thus everyday speech helps establish a proverbial tradition, which is handed down from generation to generation. Simple constructions and ordinary vocabulary

make proverbs meet a great deal of acceptance among the general public and allow them to be applied in whatever circumstances.

Dundes (1994), however, assumes that the most proverbs definitions comment on a particular action or situation in a very an overgeneralised way (p.45). Various definitions of a proverb include the following aspects: (1) a sort of a simple or compound sentence; (2) preservation of proverb meaning outside the context; (3) anonymous author; (4) common use of proverbs; (5) universal facts about human experiences; (6) addressing moral and educational values; and (7) conciseness and use of metaphor. As a result, we should confess that it is quite hard if not impossible to find a definition for a proverb in one single sentence, looking to the large scale of features the concept may carry (Dundes,1994, p.43).

No doubt, the above-mentioned requirements of proverbs are true and practical. However, certain definitions might lack such aspects that should be involved into the determination of proverbial concept. Some examples of proverb definitions. "Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to a recurrent problem." (Abrahams, 1982, p.119)

"Proverbs are brief statements showing in condensed form the accumulated life experience of the community and serving as conventional practical symbols for abstract ideas." (Galperin, 1977, p.181)

Some proverbs themselves are peoples' definitions of a proverb, like: proverbs are the wisdom of the streets, or the children of experience. A similar Arab proverb, "Take wisdom out of the insane's mouths" (*xudul-ḥikmata-min-afwahil-madzaniin/*) "All the good sense of the world runs into proverbs". To sum up, a proverb can include a saying, truth, morals, experience, lessons, and piece of advice and which has been passed between generations.

## 2. Typology of Proverbs

The attempt to organise thousands of proverbs into a meaningful order always presented a challenge. However, a real breakthrough was made when the Finnish Matti Kuusi (1914–1998) and his daughter Outi Lauhakangas managed to introduce an internationally conventional classification system of proverbs. It splits into thirteen (13) main themes. These are as follows (Mieder, 2004, pp.16-17):

- |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A) Practical knowledge of nature      | H) Social interaction     |
| B) Faith and basic attitudes          | I) Communication          |
| C) Basic observations and socio-logic | J) Social position        |
| D) The world and human life           | K) Agreements and norms   |
| E) Sense of proportion                | L) Coping and learning    |
| F) Concepts of morality               | M) Time and sense of time |
| G) Social life                        |                           |

Under the thirteen (13) main themes, there are fifty-two (52) classes. The highlighted type in bold is the concern of the study (the theme of our study) and it splits into eight (8) sub-classes that are: kinship, Development (a person's background), Child (parents / upbringing), Man and woman (ranking and position of both sexes), marriage, youth (old age), health (illness), death (the dead). This research paper will narrow down its scope to the last class of social life proverbs. That is, the proverbs which deals only with women and their relationship with men.

The fifty-two (52) classes are also subdivided into 325 subgroups with different numbers of subgroups for each main class. Some subgroups register seven or less proverb types, but there are also those subgroups that list fifty or more types. The subgroup of 'woman and man' offers seventy-three (73) proverb types. (Mieder, 2004, p.17)

With numerous extremely useful multilingual proverb collections, The Matti Kuusi international type system of proverbs is intended for serious comparative works. Proverbs are alphabetically listed by key word with their equivalents in other languages, making them accessible reference works especially for translators. However, some collections cite texts alone without any scholarly references. A typical example is the entry for “Love is blind” in Jerzy Gluski’s *Proverbs: A Comparative Book of English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian Proverbs with a Latin Appendix* (1971, p.159):

En: Love is blind.

Fr: L’amour est aveugle.

De: Die Liebe ist blind.

It: L’amore e ceco.

El: El amor es ciego

Ru: Liubov’ clepa.

Another group of international proverb collection with a quite different purpose. Their compilers simply want to indicate what proverbs exist in other cultures about a certain theme. The proverbs are all cited in translation and the individual texts are not necessarily equivalents of each other. Harold V. Cordry’s *The Multicultural Dictionary of Proverbs* (1997) offers a good example for proverbs from different cultures about “possession” (pp.204-205):

Better hold by a hair than draw by a tether. (Scottish)

Better to have than to wish. (English)

Blessed are those who possess. (Latin)

Everything goes to him who has nothing. (French)

Father’s having and mother’s having is not like having oneself. (Chinese)

Great possessions are great cares. (American)

So much as you have, so much are you sure of. (Spanish)

To each his own. (Latin)

Who has the hilt has the blade. (Welsh)

You can't take it with you. (American)

A third group of international dictionaries again includes hundreds of individual proverbs arranged alphabetically from all over the world but in one language, and each text contains the same key word. Mieder's *Encyclopedia of World Proverbs* (1986) adopts this sort of classification system; here is a selection of examples under the noun "life" (p.21):

A good life defers wrinkles. (Spanish)

An ill life makes an ill end. (Scottish)

All of life is a struggle. (Yiddish)

### **3. The Function of Proverbs in Society**

The role of proverbs is overwhelmingly the same all across the world regardless difference in time and place. The human experience and psychology are basically the same. According to Sumner (1995), this is due to, "Love, hunger and fear are the basic factors that rule the human race, primitive or cultured; there are some factors that go uninfluenced by environment or civilisation" (p.53). He puts proverbs as standing as a storehouse of the accumulated experience, knowledge and philosophy of the people.

However, proverbs still imply an educative or didactic essence by which we wish to teach, give some advice, help others in difficult situations, show people what are the most important things. Proverbs do not only recognise and but promote the beliefs and customs, care and maintain social values. In doing so, proverbs play the role of bridging the past socio-cultural values to the present ones. Most educational proverbs originate from the Biblical teachings. In such proverbs as "You cannot put new wine in old bottles" or "Do as you would be done by", the function makes them more useful and moralising speeches.

Moreover, proverbs can be often used in personal interaction. They can be a warning as in "Keep your weather eye open" or "Mind your P's and Q's", a suggestion as in "Live and let live" or "It is never too late to learn", a scolding as in "He that seeks trouble, never misses it", a justification as in "Too many cooks spoil the broth", a comment as in "Learn wisdom by the follies of others". They also warn of danger, advice or give orders and prohibitions, as they can be used to sum up one's personal life experiences.

In addition, proverbs can be a tool by which we deplore someone or discredit a situation. In a short, pithy sentence, we can express something we would not dare to say in a direct or satirical manner. We would say "a good husband makes a good wife" if we hear a man complaining about his wife while we know it is not only her fault. However, in modern writings and speeches, the function of proverbs no longer serves only didactic and moralistic purposes as a priority, instead, they are now often employed for expressions of parody, irony, or satire. (Mieder, 2012, p.123)

The relevance of some proverbs is to state some information and such proverbs can be interpreted on the lectionary speech level. Others, however, can be understood only with their metaphorical meaning and such proverbs need to be analysed on the illocutionary speech level. Some proverbs may also be examined as perlocutionary acts when they produce some important consequences concerning feeling, thought or actions.

The functions of proverbs are the same as the functions and sub-functions of speech acts. They express intellectual and emotional attitudes: disappointment, sympathy, intention, acceptance as well as moral attitudes: approval, disapproval, appreciation, apology or regret. Proverbs can function as a socialising factor as they serve to promote and maintain social norms and teach morals, diligence and purity and, ridicule laziness, snobbishness, immorality, rebelliousness and other evil behaviours. Hence, people, (especially elders), they often use

proverbs and other genre to teach their children about their past, honesty, politeness, faithfulness, and to criticize misbehaviour in general.

Because lack of debates about the impact of the proverbs as a key segment of our language, It was necessary to examine the arena of sociolinguistics to prove that language is a powerful tool that can convey a full message in a very concise and precise figurative expression. Thus, it can play social role and a key influence on a culture and rearrange its thought patterns. However, each language users have their own wording to convey the very same idea or meaning. English and Arabic, for instance are hugely different languages, and thus we are speaking about quite different way of wording, thinking and understanding.

#### **4. Sociolinguistic Study of the Arabic Proverbs**

Language pervades social life. It is a basic vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we get access to the contents of others' words. Language is implicated in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of social psychology: attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping, attribution, and so on. In this respect, it is necessary to understand how the Arabic proverb function by exploring its origin and nature. It is noteworthy that West Algerian Arabic used in the proverbs as a case for this study is closer to the Classical Arabic and almost free from word borrowing or code switching. (Bamia, 2001, p.112)

Al-Jamah (2007) conducted a comparative study on the Arabic and western proverbs. Featuring the Arabic proverbs and distinguishing them from other international proverbs have been among the major achievements in his study. In the following table, we highlight some snapshots from different studies that afforded the Arabic proverbs with some features.

Scholar	(Classical) Arabic Proverbs	Scholar	(Classical) Arabic Proverbs
Levine (1885)	Indirect / Symbolic / Embellishment valued / Sentiments stressed	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961)	Emphasis on relationship in social context / Word for social effect
Hall (1976)	High context	Ong (1980)	Almost oral society
Ting-Toomey (1985)	Implicit / The audience is more responsible for the interpretation of the message / Meaning in context	Gold (1988)	Emotional resonance / Speaker sticks to audience / Community experience / Oral experience appreciated / People and event oriented / Multiple themes

**Table 1. The Characterizes of Arabic Proverbs (adopted from Al-Jamah, 2007, p.49)**

The use of proverbs is very common as a means to convey basic truths that man's experience brought about. Symbolism is one of the main characteristics of proverbs. Therefore, there is a sort of figurativeness and ambiguity of concepts. In most cases, it is up to the collector to interpret, translate and apply these proverbs. Thus, proverbs have frequently been used as responses to assess abstract thoughts, attitudes and conflicts. Most recurrent proverbs are social life ones, however, those which deal with women are relatively still a small percentage in spite of being in hundreds.

**Conclusion**

Proverbs about women are a worry because they appear to be laden with sexism. So, as a part of language, proverbs about women are, in particular, a part of sexist language. The structure of the present chapter has identified the role of proverbs in society. However, those proverbs may indicate prejudice and antagonism toward women in social communication. In an attempt to have an overview of what was found about the portrayal of women in the west Algerian context, the next parts of this paper will examine various proverbs from a male-dominated Algerian community.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## ***RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

## **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the practical elements of the research. It explores the research design in depth, and discusses what methods employed. The aims and nature of the research place it within an ontological position and to discuss how the research questions are addressed. Different methods of data collection are discussed, focusing on the reasons for choosing particular methods over others. This is followed by a discussion of the practicalities of how the data collection was conducted, and the approaches taken to data analysis.

The present chapter includes the methodology of this paper. It splits into five (5) sections the first section introduces research questions; the second section describes the structure of the study data collection. The third section (methods) breaks up into four (4) subsections; scope of the study (gender and feminist research), the adopted approach (qualitative approach), data collection and recruiting participants. The fourth section displays questionnaire design, and finally the fifth section describes informants' background.

### **1. Research Design**

This dissertation revolves around the identification of West Algerian proverbs about women and their (mis)representations. The fundamental research questions of this paper are as follows:

1. To what extent do proverbs about women, used in the Western towns of Algeria, still play a part in painting woman's image in society?
2. What are the perceived attitudes towards the portrayal of women in cultural proverbs in the western Algerian community?

In the pursuit of this endeavour, several proverbs have been taken from Arabic sources and periodicals are screened for their proverbial content. The proverbs obtained in this process were listed. The list was analysed for content and type, using categories drawn from research on common proverbs recurrent in West Algeria. Examples also were analysed for their relative degree of dependence on cultural factors.

In order to measure public perception and attitude towards proverbs about women and their use, a survey have been conducted. The report examines how widely proverbs are still in use and to what extent their content about women is accepted among the public of west Algerian culture(s). It also looks at respondents' attitudes with regard to how comfortable or uncomfortable it feels when using negative or positive proverbs about women. The paper then examines how much prejudice there is towards women (including that of women towards women) by addressing a list of potentially controversial to a group of respondents.

## **2. Participants**

The total number of informants who participated in answering the questionnaire is ten (10). The target population includes intellectuals with different ages including university teachers. The researcher was also engaged in informal brief discussions with some people from the western Algerian towns (Oran, Mostaganem and Relizane) in order to have ideas about common proverbs about women. They helped with insights, critiques and words of support. Other participants volunteered in the study as a mere source of information.

## **3. Gender and Feminist Research**

Notably there is still an inconclusive debate about the nature and properties of gender and feminist research. Some former descriptions portray it as a research carried out by women, about women and only for women, and that research that would bring about a social evolution.

However, is there other criterion by which a given study can be classified as a feminist research?

Greaves et al (1995) state:

Methodologically, feminist research differs from traditional research for three reasons. It actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between research and subject; it is politically motivated and has a major role in changing social inequality; and it begins with the standpoints and experiences of women. (p.334)

It is also argued that this sort of research should follow a perspective “in which women’s experiences, ideas and needs (different and differing as they may be) are valid in their own right, and androcentricity – man-as-the-norm – stops being the only recognised frame of reference for human beings” (Bowles and Klein, 1983, p.83). Therefore, focusing on women’s portrayal in proverbs can be justified in terms of the validity of studying women’s needs or experiences.

Thus, feminist research embraces the philosophy of the study as well as the object of the study. Feminist researchers believe that research is conducted by people, who are shaped by culture, society, politics etc. They argue that knowledge is humanly produced (Cope, 2002) Social and human contexts will influence the questions we ask, our approach to the questions, and the interpretations from our findings (Du Bois, 1983). Thus, from a feminist perspective, there is no research in the social sciences that can be completely neutral or value-free. Code argues that the traditional way of viewing objectivity and subjectivity as two polar opposites tends to emphasise exclusions and reinforces many other dichotomies.

#### **4. The Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative research seeks to describe, understand and explain a situation *in its context*. Thus, descriptive detail is used to build up the context so that the people or structures

in a study may be best understood within their whole background, i.e. not looking at one aspect out of context. Here this has been achieved by providing rich descriptions of the selected proverbs about women in order to allow a deeper understanding of their contexts. Qualitative social science research is often concerned with how events or patterns unfold over time, and the processes involved. This is in contrast to a quantitative approach, and particularly natural science research that, in general, records a situation at one point in time, i.e. a static situation.

For the nature of the actual study and the above-mentioned reasons, therefore, a qualitative research design was pursued. A qualitative study is the most appropriate in the investigation of any social phenomenon. Grounded in phenomenology, qualitative probe involves the attempt to interpret utterance meanings and make sense of ideas or concepts expressed by individuals. In contrast to quantitative research, is less rigorous and objective and, thus, less scientific. The two authors refuted these claims, insisting that they are unfounded and are, in reality, contrary to facts. Qualitative research has found favour in forms such as case studies and ethnographies, and in the fields of psychology, cultural anthropology and even medical science, to name only a few.

With regard to quantitative research, there is often a pre-determined structure with static hypotheses, categories and labels. In contrast, a qualitative approach seeks to remain flexible in terms of the defined structure of the research in order to take advantage of new interpretations. For example, in a structured interview there may be little opportunity for a participant to volunteer an angle that the researcher had not thought of, the, which allows greater flexibility and enables ideas to be generated by, and flow from, the discussion. It is maintained that qualitative and quantitative research are hardly comparable since they rest on two different sets of postulates and reflect two distinct traditions.

## **5. Data Collection**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the paper depends on a methodology which is best characterized as theoretical and qualitative, involving only minimal descriptive statistics in the calculation of frequency for metaphorical types in the textual analysis, and reporting of 'correct' or other responses to the questionnaire. The research questions do not attempt to elicit answers that require complicated statistics. Rather, linguistic and qualitative analysis was employed.

The study involved activities of collecting proverbs; analysing them textually; and questioning intellectuals about the attitudes towards these proverbs. After the questionnaire was completed, probed the participants' experiences and strategies in responding to the questionnaire items. For the textual analysis, a corpus or body of reading materials were identified. These materials (in Arabic and English) were composed of online articles, theses, and e-books.

The corpus of proverbs about women and metaphors about women were classified according to the women's roles (daughters, wives, mothers). The sets of proverbs from several subareas of the Algerian West were demonstrated, for frequency, variety, and type of metaphorical usage, including any choices of source domain that seem to be favoured in the source language.

## **6. The Questionnaire Design**

Data was collected after distributing questionnaires. The latter consisted of three stages. The first two stages included 12 direct questions followed by proverbs where participants are asked to state their attitudes towards them. First, participants were asked them to fill in about themselves- their gender, educational background, profession, age and region. All these may possibly raise distinctions in their responses their information,

In the first stage, participants were asked whether they use proverbs in general, then they were given four possible sources for learning proverbs; media, family, elders, school, and finally books. (See Appendix) Respondents gave their opinion on three (3) scaled questions (Yes/ No/ Don't know). The order and content of the question items was the same for each of the informants. For the last two stages, the scale used was modified to five (5) point Likert Scale (Strongly agree/ Agree/ Neutral/ Disagree/ strongly disagree). This scale was intended to measure and assess the informants' attitudes and beliefs about women's portrayal in proverbs. The second stage investigated the informants' knowledge about the role of proverbs (6 questions). The third part examines to what extent informants agree or disagree with the content of some proverbs about women.

### **Conclusion**

The chapter at hands has provided sufficient information about the practical part. Through stating what methods and tools to use, the chapter has presented how the procedures of initiating the investigation. Participants have been described and the procedures of collecting data has been provided. The portrayal of women in the proverbs of the Algerian west is the core concern of the following chapter in practical terms. The elements of interest and intrigue, symbolism, and metaphorisation will be discussed after the analysis of data.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## ***FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS***

## **Introduction**

The present chapter presents the analysis of data. First, the analysis of the common West Algerian proverbs that represent women is provided. The analysis discusses the depiction of women in proverbial speech. The discussion is concerned with women's social roles, nature and stereotypes (young, unmarried girls, daughters, wives, divorced women, and mothers). Second, the analysis of the questionnaire is provided. It tends to show the attitudes of Algerian intellectuals towards the depiction of women in proverbs. The informants' actual perceived attitudes towards the proverbs that portray women contribute to the interpretations of assigning women gender roles in the West Algerian community.

### **1. Data Analysis**

This section presents first the analysis and discussion of the selected west Algerian proverbs. Second, the answers of participants on the questionnaire will be provided.

#### **1.1. Analysis of the West Algerian Proverbs**

##### **1.1.1. Women's Nature**

The following West Algerian controversial proverb proposes to limit women's freedom in order to avoid any disgrace or shame to her parents;

*/lbent laa tsallemha hruuf laa tsekenha yruuf/* (Don't allow the female learn one letter, nor occupy a space).

Such an androcentric mind, through this proverb, reveal a flagrant intention to reassert male's domination by limiting the female's personal and spatial freedom and some simple rights, such as attending school. According to the folk perspective, her schooling imposes a challenge, because it will reinforce the female's freedom and allow every possibility to stray

away and, thus, she brings “*shame*” to her family. According to the same point of view, the bigger sphere the female acquires the more authority she attains.

There is almost no distinction between the privacy of the female and that of the “house” whose walls are often unpassable for her. This is the reason why many Algerians refer to both as “*hurma*”. This overloaded word denotes three concepts, privacy, honour and one’s family members, Algerians often call mothers, sisters and wives in particular as /*eddaar*/ “the house”. This is maybe also due to the tasks assigned to the female gender, which do not exceed the house doorstep. And this is the best type of women according to the Algerian culture and a source of pride. This is clearly expressed in the statement / *d3aab mra ta9 daar*/ (He brought a woman of household.) This type of women is supposed to be a full-time mom who is able to manage her household, take care of her husband, and homeschool her children. The house is also regarded as the safest sphere, which guarantees a girl’s chastity. The notion of chastity here necessarily equates and becomes more entangled with the idea of female virginity. Historically speaking, the two concepts have hardly ever been distinguishable from one another. Conceptually, both revolve around the idea that sex out of wedlock (context of restraint) is dirty and unforgettable sin, and thus it brings an internal disgrace even after having repented.

In a similar line of thought, a number of Algerian proverbs paint a generic dark picture about women and usually call men not to trust them and to be aware of their deceptions.

Consider *these sincere pieces of advice to a man who has a poor skill about women:*

Proverb	Translation
<p>/suug ennsa metjaar jaa ddaakhel rod baalek  <i>jwariwlek men errebh quntaar w yediwlek raas  maalek./</i>  سوق النساء سوق مطيار يا الداخل رد بالك  يوريو لك من الربح قنطار و يديو لك راس مالك</p>	<p>The market of women is unprofitable,  beware if you are coming to it.  They entice you with big profits, but they  end up stripping you of your capital.</p>

**Table 2. Women’s Nature Depiction in Algerian Proverbs**

Notice that the word / *metjaar*/ is the adjective of the Algerian Arabic word / *tijra*/ that is a superstition, and the adjective / *metjaar*/ means superstitious. And when talking about markets, it is an ill omen that the trader will make no profits but rather more loses. The expression /*suug ennsa*/ or ‘*the market of women*’ is very metaphoric. It crystallizes the undiscovered world of the ‘*other*’ sex (women). This world is painted as dark and full of pitfalls and deceptions. This maybe the reason why women are accused of being behind every evil. In our society, women are often are accused of shaking relationships between the members of the same family and stirring disputes between the sincere friends. Some proverbs depict women as skilled maneuverers wielding weakness masterfully to pretend to be innocent. Consider these examples:

Proverbs	Translation
/majxaşer biin leḥbaab yiir ennsa w eddrahem/ ما يخسر بين الاحباب غير النساء والدرهم	Nothing undermines relationships between sincere friends but women and money.
/rakba ʕla ḍhar essbaʕ, w tguul el ḥdaajat jakulni./ راكبة على ظهر السبع وتقول الحدايات ياكلوني	She rides the lion’s back, then screams ‘the kite is going to eat me’.
/jathazmuu bel lfa3 w jetxalalaw bel ʕgaareb/ يتحزمو بالأفاعي ويتخللو بالعقارب	They (women) take snakes as waist belts, and scorpions as anklets!
/mzajen ennsa beḍḍahkaat lukaan fiha jduumu./ **/ lḥuut jʕuum fel-ma w huuma bla-ma jʕuum/ مزين النساء بالضحكات لوكان فيها يدومو الحوث يعوم فالماء وهو ما بلا ماء يعومو	Women’s cheerfulness is bliss, if but only they keep being faithful (to men) The fish swim in the water, but they (women) swim out of it.

**Table 3. Women’s Nature in Algerian Proverbs**

The last proverb describes woman as a necessary soulmate who double man’s joy, however, the author also complains, on the other hand, about woman’s character, which described as impulsive and oft-changing.

In a more extensive and generic sense, tough options, namely physical abuse against women, are permissible for the sake of maintaining harmony inside the institution of the Algerian family, thereby, transforming the relations of violence and domination into those of affinity. Consider the current example; / *ḍrub lmra tertaah* /, translatable as (*beat your wife to comfort her*). Funnily, the traditional view does not only treat woman as the one who is easily inclined to submission, but also depicts domestic violence as a healthy communication between the sexes, and for the wife's own interest.

### 1.1.2. Daughters and Unmarried Young Girls

Because the girl is always expected to get married once she is mature. So, if you have a daughter, she will soon leave you and live with her husband and all your endeavours to bring her up and educate her has gone in vain. Consider the following proverb:

*/daar lbnaat xawja/* (The house of girls is empty )

In other words, your girls will get married and leave the house empty. However, if she fails to meet her community's expectations, she is to be a butt of cruel sayings. Some proverbs depict the situation as a trouble that needs an urgent solution as the case with the following West Algerian proverbs:

Proverbs	Translation
<i>/ḥateq slakha ezwaadz/</i> العناق سلاكها الزواج	The salvation of an unmarried girl is marriage
<i>/elḥarḥ bekri we zwaadz bekri/</i> الحرث بكري والزواج بكري	Earth cultivation is early and marriage is early.

**Table 4. Proverbs of Early Marriage**

According to the traditional view, teaching the young girl how to be the person who can manage the home is always a priority because marriage is at the gate, as the second proverb denotes. Marriage at an early age is a precaution taken urgently to prevent any disgrace.

Seen in this light, virginity, however, once lost is not recoverable. Focusing on virginity creates problems for an ethic of chastity. To equate virginity with chastity thus implies that infractions of the law of chastity are unspeakable abomination. The girl will always be seen as a woman with a “chequered past”.

However, if the girl’s marriage is doomed to fail, the popular culture has a different point of view, which considers a failed marriage more deplorable than the condition; */bqaaj feddar wella zwaadz el Saar/* (staying at home is better for you than a shameful marriage). The divorced women are more subjected to humour and dismissive quotes, such as:

*/el hadzala rabaat fdzel maflah, rabaat kelb manbbah /*, (The divorced woman reared a calf, but it did not succeed (proved passive), she raised a dog but it did not bark (proved coward

This proverb depicts the divorced women as omen of failure, and thus everything she aims to do is doomed to fail. Other proverbs consider this kind of girls as the root of evil. Consider the following proverb: */el hadzala lhamha msawes/* (the divorced woman’s flesh is poisonous!)

### 1.1.3. Courtship, Marriage and Wives

The Algerian traditional view sees marriage as a sacred institution due to the religious background of the Algerian society, but also marriage is regarded as a breakthrough in one’s life that determines the rest of one’s lifetime. This is why it requires a full preparation from both sides;

*/zwaadz liila tedbiruu Saam/* (Marriage of one night requires a year of full preparation).

However, many proverbs depict marriage as a matter that concerns man in principal. Implicitly, marriage for a girl is regarded by the traditional view as a privilege. The girl ought to accept the marriage offer *mindlessly*; otherwise, she will undergo a terrible life as a *spinster* or an *old main*. Therefore, the bride has to accept her new husband no matter how he looks, no

matter how his character is, after all, the proverb justifies; */errraadzel raadzel/* (man is man, i.e. no shame or blame on him). From a folklore perspective man is perfect. Moreover, the new wife is sometimes described as a troublemaker who has come only to destroy her husband's life. This picture is well illustrated in the following proverb;

*/kaan mhenni fra maʕza/* (He was at peace until he bought a goat).

Notice how woman is compared to that hardy domesticated animal which is known by some annoying behaviours. Almost the same message is expressed by Abderrahman El Majdoub;

*/marwaan lqiteh yxamem weasel lʕdʕem fi lhateh hadaak men zuudzt elhem beʕʕajelha ʕaʕbateh/*<sup>1</sup>(I found Marwan overthinking, the bone has reached his uvula, because of his troublesome wife, she is torturing him with her deeds).

This is the reason why man should be careful in selecting his future partner, the tradition viewpoint stress that the daughter is like her mother, as this proverb denotes;

*/qbel ma tlem saal ʕla elʔum/* (Before you make your mind (to choose a wife) ask about her mother).

Beauty is deceitful in most of the case as the following Algerian proverb tells man not to marry some beauty queen because she will certainly disappoint him;

*/xanfuusa tlahini xir men yzala tʕaʕebni/* (I'd rather have a beetle that amuses me better than a gazelle which tortures me).

The beetle in this proverb is associated with ugliness, while the gazelle commonly symbolizes a beautiful female.

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<sup>1</sup> El Majdoub, A., "Al-qawl alma'thur min kalam Abderrahman El Majdoub." Available from <http://ainelabid14.ahlamontada.com/t4-topic> Accessed on 7 May 2019

In the same vein, family is seen as God's will and a fundamental social institution. You need a wife whose beauty must be inward. Because after a while it is not the physical beauty of your wife that is going to make you or break you. It is her character. Again, the girl's physical appearance is deceitful in most cases as this proverb warns:

*/la jaʕadʒbek nuwwaar eddefla fel waad dayer ɖlaayel/ \* /la jaʕadʒbek ziin eʔofla ɥatta tʃuuf el fʃaaʒel/* (Don't be pleased with the Oleander roses. In the valley, they are overshadowing the place And don't be pleased with a girl's beauty, until you witness her deeds).

The metaphoric expression (overshadowing the place) denotes the numerousness of this kind of roses of those undesirable oleander trees. This image is compared to the situation of many beautiful girls but very few good who can prove useful wives.

Unlike women who are regarded according to many proverbs as an evil omen, man is a good omen. The next proverb encourages men to get acquaintance with other men and exalt themselves from approaching women:

*/maʕrift erdʒaal knuuz w maʕrift ennsa ndʒaasa/* (Your acquaintance with men is a treasure, and that with women is an impurity).

The metaphoric word */knuuz/* or "treasures" denotes a future interest or favours from that person. However, the first half of this proverb is more common today among Algerians, maybe because they abstain from offending the other sex, or the second half does not serve the context in addition to its overt insult. (some others say */xnuuz/* (dirtiness) instead of */ndʒaasa/*)

Because the female gender is expected to perform many duties at home, she is not supposed to step out of its borders, according to the Algerian traditional view. If she does not conform to this norm, her future marital life is condemned to fail;

*/lmra li tʃuuf mateʒzel suuf/* (The woman who wanders can never knit wool).

Travelling or wandering has always been a typically masculine behaviour. For a male, it is something praiseworthy, but absolutely the opposite for a female, because it conflicts with socially constructed femininity etiquettes. The proverb above may be inspired by the Classical Arabic proverb */laa xajra fii imra?atin tadzuul, wa laa xajra fii radzulin la jadzuul/* which can be translated as, “There is no benefit from a woman who travels (a lot) and there is no benefit from a man who does not.”

Wives are supposed to most trusted counsellor whenever there has be a decision made. The husband should go and talk to his wife to hear what she has to say then try to reach an agreement. However, in the Algerian context, things are totally different. Here, you may consult her but never listen to her.

*/saawer lmra w xaalef rajha/* (Consult your wife but do the opposite of what she tells you to do).

One may wonder, what is the use of seeking advice then? Unfortunately, many people see that women advise and suggest from emotions and heart rather than their minds and this is why their opinions are ignored and considered to be stupid. Even when man’s decision proves totally wrong, she should not gloat over him.

Some common Algerian proverbs claim that woman is always immature and their views are short-sighted, and weak physically and emotionally. Others accuse wives of being treacherous and maybe a source of misfortune and poverty!

Proverb	Translation
<i>/lmra nus Sqel/</i> المرانص عقل	Woman is half a brain. (half-witted)
<i>/lmra dSifa/</i> المراضعيفة	Woman is weak
<i>/laa fel dzbel waad mafluuum laa fefta riih daafi/ **/laa fel Sduu gelb marhuuum laa Senda ennsa Sahd waafi/</i>	No valley known in the mountain, no warm breeze in the winter

لا في الجبل واد معلوم، لا في الشتا ربح دافي لا في العدو قلب مرحوم، لا عند النساء عهد وافي	No mercy in the enemy's heart, no women's oath is fulfilled.
<i>/nwasik ja hareθ lhalfa baalek men duxaanha la jaʕmiik/ /la tetzawadz bel mra el maʕfuuna tetʕaawen hijja w ezmaan ʕliik/ نوصيك يا حارث الحلفا بالك من دخانها يعميك لا تتزوج بالمرأ المعفونة تتعاون هي والزمان عليك</i>	You, who cultivate the sawgrass, beware of it, least its smoke blinds you Do not marry a rotten (undesirable) girl. She and misfortune will combine against you.

**Table 5. Women Depiction in Algerian Proverbs**

Note that the word */ezmaan/* in the second clause of the last proverb originally means (time) but the colloquial use changed its meaning into (misfortune, poverty and tough times). Certain kind of women in this proverb are looked at as an ill omen, maybe because of spending money extravagantly while her husband spares no effort raise and save it.

#### 1.1.4. Mother's Position

As far as motherhood is concerned, religion and morals have a far-reaching impact on proverbs. Mothers have a respectful and dignified position in proverbs. In the Algerian and the Arabo-Islamic culture, paying a particular honour and obedience the parents and mothers in particular is a sign of piety. Observe the following Quranic text, */wa qaḍaa rabbuka an laa taʕbuduu illa ijjaahu wa bil waalidajni iḥsaan /*<sup>2</sup> (Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him alone, and treat parents with the best of kindness. 17:23) Here is also a much-known prophetic account about mothers when a man came to the Prophet and said ‘O Messenger of God! Who among people is the worthiest of my companionship? The prophet said: Your mother. Then the man said, “then who?” The prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, “Then who?” The prophet said: Then your father.<sup>3</sup> One of the main and

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Quran, Surat Al-Israa', verse: 23

<sup>3</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 2 Available from <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/sunnah/bukhari/073.sbt.html>

universal proverbs about women */Al dʒanatu taḥta aqdaami al ʔummahaat/* (Heaven is at the feet of mothers).

In this context, here is one of El-Madjdoub's proverbs about mothers that some people still use today. */makkan kel-ḥarθ tdzara makkan kelʔum ḥbiib/* (there is no profitable trade like land cultivation, there is no sincere friend like mothers).<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2. Analysis of the Questionnaire

Gender		Age		
Male	Female	25 to 30 years	30 to 40 years	More than 40
5	5	2	5	3

**Table 6. Information about Informants**

The number of male and female participants is intentionally chosen to be equal. Five males and five females are participating in this questionnaire, they are aged between 25 to 45; two (2) of them are less than 30, five (5) are 30 to 40, and only three (3) are over 40.

### Source of learning proverbs

Statements	Yes	No
1_ I have learnt proverbs through mass media.	4	6
2_ I have learnt proverbs from my family.	7	3
3_ I have learnt proverbs from elders.	8	2
4_ I have learnt proverbs in the school.	4	6
5_ I have learnt proverbs from books.	2	8

**Table 7. Source of Proverbs**

<sup>4</sup> Elmajdoub, A., "Al-qawl alma'thur min kalam Abderrahman Elmajdoub." Available from <http://ainelabid14.ahlamontada.com/t4-topic> Accessed on 7 May 2019

The participants reported variant answers about the sources of the proverbs they learnt. Old people and the family were the most common sources of learning proverbs. Four (4) participants reported that their sources of proverbs are schools and mass media. Less informants opted for 'books' as sources of proverbs.

### Roles of proverbs

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1_ Proverbs depict women as weak and dependent.	1	4	4	1
2_ Proverbs encourage discrimination and violence against women.	1	2	5	2
3_ Proverbs promote patriarchal society.	2	1	4	3
4_ Proverbs contradict with each other.	2	3	4	1
5_ Proverbs paint a good picture about women.	3	3	3	1

**Table 8. Roles of Proverbs**

The table above shows that participants consider proverbs to have different roles. Notably, four (4) informants agreed and four (4) others disagreed on the role of depicting women as weak and dependent. Five (5) disagreed on the role of encouraging discrimination and violence against women. As for the role of promoting patriarchy, four (4) disagreed on it, and three (3) strongly did. Other roles received similar numbers of agreements and disagreements. Three (3) participants agreed that proverbs portray women in good ways, and other three (3) strongly did.

**Part three: Actual attitudes towards some controversial proverbs**

Proverbs		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1_ / <i>lxiiir mra weffar mra/</i> The good is woman, the evil is woman.	M	2	1	0	0
	F	2	2	1	2
2_ / <i>jaawer lmra w xaalef rajha/</i> Consult your wife, but oppose her advice.	M	1	0	2	1
	F	2	1	1	2
3_ / <i>elħarθ bekri wezwaadz bekri/</i> Earth ploughing is early and marriage is early	M	1	2	1	0
	F	2	1	3	0
4_ / <i>majxaşer biin leħbaab yiir ennsa w eddrahem/</i> Nothing destroys good relationships between sincere friend but women and money	M	1	2	1	1
	F	1	2	1	1
5_ / <i>lŝaataq slakha ezwaadz/</i> The salvation of the free (unmarried) girl is marriage	M	1	2	2	1
	F	0	0	3	1

**Table 9. Perceived Attitudes of Algerian Intellectuals**

The table above shows that seven (7) males and females agreed on the first proverb (four of them are females). Six informants disagreed on the second proverb (three of them are females). Other proverbs were perceived differently with agreements and disagreements of informants. Notably, the fourth proverb received six agreements, and the last proverb received seven disagreements (four of them from females).

**2. Findings and Discussion**

Many proverbs from the western Algerian community's culture(s) stereotypically portray woman as a sharp-tongued, long-winded, empty-headed, toy-like creature who is faithless to the man by whom she should be ruled and to whom she belongs like property or livestock. Proverbs stereotype women behave without shame, and they are submissive yet

contradict each other. Other proverbs, on the other hand, admit that women will not easily accept a subordinate position.

While the aforementioned proverbs stress that, the female is a source of shame and a threat to one's honour, having a daughter can be a source of pride especially when she is well brought up as manifested in the following proverb:

***/rabbii bnaatek tenki hessadek/*** (Educate your daughter to spite your enviers)

Having a daughter in every family is something necessary as the case in this proverb;

***/li masanduuf lbnaat maşarfu had bah maat/***, (The one who does not have daughters; nobody will know how he has passed away).

That means if you do not have daughters, the circumstances of your death will remain unknown. Because daughters are expected to care much about their parents more than sons. In addition, the daughter is always the one who keeps the secrets of her mother deep, and share her preoccupations. Thus, the woman who does not have a daughter will carry her secrets with her if she passes away. Another contradictory proverb:

***/lbnaat şmaart eddaar/*** (Girls are the essence of home).

The most paradoxical proverb is the next one which paints woman as a mystery to man;

***/lxiiir mra weffar mra/***, (The good is woman, and the evil is woman)

Not surprisingly, women are portrayed in many proverbs as weak, ignorant, stupid, and naïve, such as ***/mra nus şqqel/*** (women are half-witted) and ***/mra dşiiifa/*** (woman is weak) ,while other number of proverbs depict women as strong, intelligent, witted, aware, and deceitful. Consider these headlines:

***/mra sşiiiba (or /waaşra/)*** (woman are dangerous)

*/effiṭaan tilmiḍ el mar?a/* (Satan is the pupil of woman).

*/idda ḥelfet fiik mra baat gaaṣed/* (If a woman has threatened you, spend that night vigilant).

As fully exposed in a number of examples, the proverbs of Algerian western community depict women as fragile, vulnerable, half-witted, sharp-tongued, troublemaker, wicked, and deceitful. Their Proverbs about women are a worry because they appear to be laden with prejudice and antagonism toward women. They are viewed as prone to sin because of their tendency to be driven by their emotions, notably lust, and excessive passion.

Western Algeria's proverbs, however, hold a grudge against women by depicting them as a threat to the family's reputation, and thus looking to early marriage as an urgent and necessary solution. Such proverbs still meet an acceptance among Algerians, especially men, as our survey shows. They denied all sexist proverbs that devalue women, though reality can be a bit different. Social networks make an exception where women are still subjected to a very sexist and demeaning language.

### **Conclusion**

The present chapter has analyzed the common proverbs from the western Algerian community that portrays women's roles differently. After analyzing a number of proverbs according to the roles of women (daughters, wives, mothers), data collected from a questionnaire administered to ten intellectuals has been analyzed. The chapter closed with discussing the major findings. Remarkably, the culture of the western community in Algeria has several proverbs that misrepresent many roles of women negatively, while some of the proverbs, particularly about mothers, represent women positively. Finally, the informants of the questionnaire shared to some extent more positive attitudes and agreement than disagreements on the proverbs that misrepresent women.

## General Conclusion

Unquestionably, the study of Algerian cultural proverbs and the Algerians' attitudes towards them implicates that man should always rule over woman. That could be linked to natural balance of life. Algerian men are expected to be the primary wage earners, while women are expected to be primarily responsible for housework and a caregiver. While men are depicted as the stronger sex, are thought to be intelligent, courageous, and determined; women, on the other side, are stereotyped as more governed by their emotions, and their virtues are expected to be chastity and modesty.

When it comes to women's image, various opinions and interpretations about the weight of the proverb can be valid and acceptable. Therefore, other approaches to the study of these proverbs can be used. When examining social elements, it is always useful to observe the impact of people's attitudes of a given era. On a larger scale, the picture changes if we compare proverbs about women from one period to another and from one community to another. In this respect, one should ask, was the coinage of proverbs in the past the job of males? If so, was that the reason why the image of women portrayed in proverbs was distorted?

Through this brief study, we come to the conclusion that proverbs still constitute a considerable indicator of a people's way of life and attitudes especially in male-dominated societies. Proverbs and folklore function as a propaganda to perpetuate traditional stories, experiences, customs, beliefs and practices of one generation to the next. They constitute the embodiment of a way of life and all that it entails in terms of lessons and morals.

It is unreasonable in such an advanced age to find that females are tabooed or misrepresented. In the Algerian society, women are still seen as omen of either good or evil. Despite the fact that Algerians' attitudes have much improved towards sexist proverbs of their own folklore, society still look down on women. They are still regarded as a foodstuff or a

plaything. Although many proverbs that promote such an ideology are no longer very common, but their impact is still felt and noticed.

Several factors could have limited or affected the results of this study. Sample size was very limited due to the huge difficulty to communicate with different kinds, ages, natures of Western Algerians and convince them of cooperate with the survey. As a result, the number of the participants was limited. A larger sample size may have allowed for more conclusive results and reliable findings. Another limiting factor could be the lack of academic writings that deal with sexist proverbs in the Algerian society, except some spontaneous discussions and comments in some online forums.

Finally, the researcher recommends promoting critical reading by conducting academic conferences to show the correct way of dealing with oral folklore and proverbs in particular. Moreover, mass media should play a full part in readjusting women's image instead of perpetuating the traditional one. As for future research on proverbs, university students need to deal with gender issues that are relevant to the current social and cultural status.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire on Proverbs About Women

Dear informant,

This questionnaire is a part of a study conducted for the completion of a Master dissertation on the representation of women in proverbs, namely in the Western Algerian ones. The information you provide will allow us to interpret the Algerians' perception and attitudes towards the proverbs that portray women (negatively or positively).

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Gender:  Male  Female  
Age:  18\_24  25\_30  Over 30  
State/province/region: .....  
Profession/occupation: ..... Area/Major .....

#### PART 1: Please indicate whether these sentences are true or false

	Yes	No	Don't know
1. I have learnt proverbs through the mass media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have learnt proverbs through my family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I have learnt proverbs from elders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have learnt proverbs in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have learnt proverbs by reading books	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I use proverbs about women in my interactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART2: What do you think about these statements?

**Note:** SA: strongly agree, A: agree, /: neutral, D: disagree, SD: strongly disagree

	SA	A	/	D	SD
7. Folk proverbs depict women as weak and dependent	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. Proverbs encourage sex discrimination and violence against women.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. Proverbs about women promote patriarchy in society.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Proverbs about women contradict with each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. Proverbs paint a good image for mothers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

PART3: What do you think about these proverbs?

	SA	A	/	D	SD
13. /lxiir mra weffar mra/ الخير مرا والشر مرا	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. /faawer lmra w xaalef rajha/ شاور المرا وخالف رايبها	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15. _/elharθ bekri wezwaadz bekri/ الحرث بكري والزواج بكري	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. /majxaşer biin leḥbaab yiir ennsa w eddrahem/ ما يخسر بين الاحباب غير النساء والدرهم	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. /lṣaataq slakha ezwaadz/ العناق سلاكها الزواج	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Thanks for your collaboration**