

Gendering the Childhood: A Feminist Critique of Asymmetries Found in Punjabi Proverbs

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Abstract

The present study aims to critically analyze Punjabi proverbs related to childhood in the light of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. Stratified purposive sampling has been used to identify a collection of 164 Punjabi proverbs that mention sons and daughters or boys and girls. The source of these selections is a dictionary (Bajwa, 2011). FCDA focuses on the production, negotiation, and dissemination of gendered relations of power through discursive practices. Proverbs are transcribed and translated and divided into thematic domains and categories with the help of native speakers having English proficiency. The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that the girls are target characters in a more significant number of proverbs compared to the boys. The study contends that male babies and boys have been presented in a glorifying and satisfying manner while female babies and girls are depicted as some calamity and burden. The analysis revealed that Punjabi society is biased towards children based on their gender. These discursive patriarchal tendencies are not only depreciating female children but also depriving them of their self-esteem and social confidence. Gender bias is not only being reflected but also conserved, propagated, and perpetuated through such traditional folk genre. It can be suggested that such ideologically loaded cultural oral traditions must be brought under severe scrutiny and replaced by more neutral oral genres.

Keywords: Gender; Childhood; Socialization; Patriarchy; Identity Construction

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Introduction

The proverb is a sub-genre of oral literature that imparts wisdom rooted in a predominantly agrarian society such as Punjabi. The orality of Punjabi language is overlooked, and research about proverbs is a relatively less explored sub-genre. Few anthropologists and linguists have explored indigenous knowledge systems regarding gender representation, especially about children (Khan, Mustafa, and Ali, 2017; Sanauddin, 2015; Rasul, 2015 and Saddique, 2013).

Proverbs have always been given high value in oral societies and their narratives; Punjabi society is no exception. Though social change due to various factors is influencing the traditional thinking in such societies, yet a good number of people still hold on to the old patriarchal tendencies. The main argument of this study is that the patriarchal tendencies and asymmetrical relationships in Punjabi society have their foundation in early childhood. No significant study could be located, which had focused on the gender-based inequality between male and female children delineated and propagated in Punjabi proverbs. The objective of the present research is to explore the gender asymmetries hidden in these ‘cultural capsules.’ The study is an attempt to find out answers to the following research questions:

1. How are Punjabi proverbs constructing the identity of daughters?
2. How are Punjabi proverbs constructing the identity of sons?
3. What pieces of advice are given to parents through Punjabi proverbs to deal with children according to their gender?

Literature Review

Finnegan (1970) has paid close attention to the role of oral literature in constructing and reflecting societies' internal structure. The relationship between social institutions and folklore has been discussed by Dundes (1964). He demonstrated that folklore continues to exist in society because it helps people make meanings of their social experiences. Representation and construction of gendered identities have been explored by some African scholars (Schipper, 2003; Ennaji, 2008; Hussein, 2004 and 2009; Balogun, 2010; Mpungose; 2010 Ntshinga, 2015). They have studied gender in different African languages, brought to light the image of males and females from multiple perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies and come to wide-ranging findings and conclusions. Most of these studies have revealed that females are mostly marginalized through these proverbs. They even go so far as to affirm that these

culturally authentic language pieces are the tools used by traditional societies to keep women in place.

Sharifi and Nakhavaly's feminist analysis (2013) of Persian proverbs shows that there are elements of oppression in the collected proverbs which relate to women and violate their rights and dignity. Semantic derogation in the Persian language usually shows women as: "evil and capricious"; "the root of disasters"; "inferior", and "worthless beings" and men as "avaricious"; "absolutist" and "cruel" (p. 195). Furthermore, Kiyimba (2005) has studied proverbs of Lagunda language about girls and boys becoming into men and women. The focus of this study is the importance given to boys through the welcoming and rewarding attitude towards them and their mothers while a contrastive reaction towards baby girls and their mothers. The second most prominent aspect of this study is the element of beauty in men and women and different reactions towards it and connotations attached to the beauty of men and women. No other aspect of gender portrayal is explored or discussed, which left a gap for other researchers.

Siddiqui (2013) has analyzed Urdu proverbs, and Rasul (2015) has studied Urdu proverbs in comparison with English. Nadil, Sultan and Kaker (2018) have studied Balochi proverbs and brought into light the bias and prejudice present in these folklore items concerning Pakistani society. Women in Urdu proverbs are presented as bothersome, deceitful, fraudulent, and intractable. These studies presented significant findings, but their analysis remained focused on overall and general representation. Khan, Sultana, and Arab (2015) contended that the *Pakhto* proverbs adhere to the tenants of *Pakhtunwali* - the code of honor that defines what it means to be a Pakhtun (Hawkins, 2009), while to Tair (1987) *Pakhtunwali* still survives as it is preserved in proverbs and reinforces the patriarchal social structure. These linguistic expressions with an element of gender bias also serve to preserve the age-old gender inequalities, which are manipulated and exploited to erect social structure marked by gender imbalance. The language of proverbs advocates masculinity and male domination in the decision-making process, a division of labor, and the domestic and public spheres.

Khan, Mustafa, and Ali (2017) have studied Punjabi proverbs with a focus on the representation of multiple identities in general and revealed that women had been mostly presented in a face-threatening manner while men are depicted in a face-saving one. This research concluded that patriarchal social tendencies are not only reflected but also created and perpetuated through Punjabi proverbs. However, this study did not investigate the proverbs about baby girls and boys in a comprehensive manner. Hence, the present study tries

to fill the research gap by analyzing Punjabi proverbs about children in detail and every aspect being brought to light from birth till death.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

To explore the gender-specific proverbs about sons and daughters, a mixed methodology is adopted. Punjabi proverbs are selected from a Punjabi dictionary '*Akhan Lok Syaney*' (2011) by Ahsan Bajwa. A total of 164 proverbs mentioning son or daughter or both are selected through stratified purposive sampling. Only representative proverbs have been discussed and explained for the scope of the present research. Research participants (native Punjabi speakers proficient in English) have been consulted for the translation and thematic explanation of the selected proverbs. Furthermore, Thematic Content Analysis is used to group proverbs according to their content, and their main ideas and thematic categories are developed to systemize the analysis. Findings regarding the representation of the male and female children are critically compared and contrasted.

Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) (Lazar, 2005) has been used as the theoretical framework. The notion of gender relationality is assured by adding proverbs related to male and female children. It looks at gender-based inequalities and the perpetuation of patriarchal tendencies in traditional societies through different discursive practices. Hence, it is a suitable framework to look at the Punjabi proverbs and reveal how gender is administering the beliefs and attitudes of parents towards their very own children. It deals with gender at one side and discourse on the other side, and the present research has combined both these perspectives to explore gender-based asymmetries found in Punjabi proverbs related to sons and daughters.

Findings and Data Analysis

Punjabi Proverbs and Daughters

On the Birth of Girls

1. *Dhiyan jamdiyan ty mapey neewen ho jandey* (p. 207). (The birth of daughters brings disgrace to the parents).
2. *Jinhan dhiyan jamiyan, ohna galan ghinyan* (p. 158). (Those who give birth to daughters are liable to be abused). In Punjabi society, using abusive language with the reference of daughters to express verbal aggression against the parents is a common phenomenon. This proverb has mentioned that daughters become a means of social disgrace for parents.

3. *Dhee walyan dey gher phoorrhi* (p. 206) (The home having daughters is like a funeral ceremony). The sadness and anxiety of the parents having daughters are reflected in this proverb by comparing the house with daughters as a place of constant mourning.

On the looks of the Girls

4. *Kaani kurri tey zehr dee purri* (p. 277). (A one-eyed girl is like a pack of poison for parents). The importance of the physical appearance of a female child is emphasized.

5. *Chunni kurri tey panj oont daaj* (p. 174) (A daughter with small eyes will have to be given dowry to be carried at five camels)

The physical appearance of a female child matters a lot, and any physical deformity will become a hindrance in finding a suitable match for her. Many dowry items may have to be arranged as compensation for her physical ugliness and unattractive appearance.

Bringing up and growth

6. *Dhee dharek tey putter amb* (p. 206) (Daughters are thorny trees and sons are mango ones). Daughters are presented metaphorically as bitter and thorny trees that do not require any special effort to grow up and remain fruitless while the sons are like mango trees that demand great and extended care but give sweet fruit once they are grown up.

Belief about Nutrition

7. *dhiyan da khada ret wich, putran da khada khet wich* (p. 208) (Feeding daughters is like watering the sand while feeding sons is like watering the fertile fields). The benefits gained by parents as the outcome of feeding sons and daughters are demarcated metaphorically.

Death

8. *Dhee hasdi na marey, dheer wasdi na marey, dheer jamdi mar jae, jida dukh vee na ae* (p. 206). (A daughter should not die while living a happy life but should die instantly after birth so that it may not grieve her parents much).

Outsiders

11. *Dhiyan pachan na rajiyen, puttar pachay faqeer* (p. 207) (Even kings cannot keep daughters at home, and a beggar would keep sons with him). Punjabi society's custom to send daughters to their husbands' home and keep sons with oneself is mentioned here.
12. *Dhiyan da perra Rubb tuun wich nhi ralaya* (p. 208). (God did not include girl's food in the food of the family). They have to leave once they are grown up and able to take the responsibility of a family.
13. *Dhee un-bhauna prohna aey* (p. 209). (Daughter is an unwanted guest). As an uninvited guest, she is not welcomed wholeheartedly, and her stay is not pleasant, and she has to live with the parents temporarily).
14. *Doli kaddan mapey, tey manji kaddan sohrey* (p. 212) (Parents will send her at marriage, and she will be sent to the graveyard by her in-laws) Advice is given to daughters that once married they should stay at her husband's place till her death.

Animal Imagery and Daughters

15. *Chirryan uddiyan tey kurriyan gaiyan sohrey, murr qismat nal awan* (p. 172) (Sparrows flew away and daughters once married, would come back by the stroke of fortune). Daughter's temporary abode at parents' place and her powerlessness and dependence at her husband and in-laws' will are mentioned through animal imagery by comparing her with the sparrows).
16. *Majh gaan dhan dee, dhee behn junn dee* (p. 336) (Buffalo and cow are bought by money, daughters and sisters are only by blood). Animal imagery is used to convey the belief that daughters and sisters are made through blood relations. A person cannot be a brother or father to a stranger female.

Objectification through material objects

17. *Dhiyan bagana dhan hundian ny* (p. 206) (Daughters are other people's wealth) A dissociative proverb describes daughters as material objects that belong to others more than the parents.
18. *Dhee da tey zameen da mull nhi watti da* (p. 205) (Taking price of your daughter and agricultural land is not a good act) Objectification of daughters is maintained through bracketing them with lifeless and material objects. Punjabi people believe in giving dowry to their daughters instead of taking any bride money from the groom or his family.
19. *Dhee sukhi tan putt da teer, dhee dukhi tan jiger da teer* (p. 206). (A prosperous daughter is an arrow in the thigh while an aggrieved one is an arrow through the liver). Metaphorical representation of two different states of

daughters is evident from this proverb that daughters are a source of anxiety in every state. Once again, objectification of a female child is done using lifeless and material objects like 'arrow'.

Inheritance/Dowry

20. *Dhiyaan hathaan da ditta lena, Putran sari bhuiin sambhni* (p. 208). (Daughters would take what (dowry) is given to them, and the sons would be handed over the property). In this proverb, parents are told that girls are entitled to only those items they will give them as dowry while leaving home; the rest of the property will be inherited and taken over by their sons.

Miscellaneous Beliefs about daughters

20. *Dhiyan dey dukh burey* (p. 209) (Grieves of daughters are very disturbing) Daughters are considered as helpless creatures whose misfortunes are very tortuous for their parents.

21. *Dhee kisey dee mandi nhi tey nooh kisey dee change nhi* (p. 206). (No daughter could be bad, and no daughter-in-law could be good). Daughters are always helpful and compassionate for their parents but never sympathize with the parents of her husband. The same girl would behave differently in two different identities.

22. *Dhiyan tey lajjan hundiyan ney* (p. 209). (Honor is associated with the daughters). The concept of 'gherat' (honor) is associated with the females of the family and especially daughters. Hence, they are protected like a very delicate object which should not be exposed to the cruelties of the male-dominated society in young age.

Punjabi Proverbs and Sons

On the birth of sons

1. *Chan charhay tey putter jammey gujhay nhi rehndey* (p. 175). (The full moon and the birth of sons cannot be hidden).

2. *Reiseen Puter na jamdey haor sab gallaan* (p. 227) (A son cannot be given birth by copying others, everything else is possible). The birth of a son is cherished through these proverbs as an indication of being blessed.

As the first baby after marriage

3. *Kanak kateen tey putter jetha* (p. 285). (The wheat should ripe in *Katak* (a Punjabi month), and a son should be born as the first child). Son's birth as the

eldest child to become a supporter of the parents by getting young soon is equated with the crop of wheat to ripe in the most suitable month.

4. *Gher kotha, maal ootha, putter jetha, phal petha, sabh changay* (p. 313). (One's own house, a camel, the eldest son, and sweet fruit are all useful items). The eldest son is mentioned with all the right things a man can have, including a good house, a camel in the animal category, and sweet fruit. Animal imagery (camel) is used to glorify the importance of elder sons.

Youthfulness at birth

5. *Putter jamday ee jawan hunday ney* (p. 106). (Sons are youthful even at the moment of their birth). The importance of male babies is reinforced through this proverb indicating the prospective benefits he would bring to his family.

A single son is not enough

6. *Ik putter na jain runnen, gher wanjey taan bhunney* (p. 50). (Oh wife! Do not give birth to only one son; it is not suitable for the house). A wife is expected to give birth to many sons to become the support of their father.

On the looks

7. *Putter bhawen koja howey maan pyo nu dubber yara hunda ay* (p. 107) (Even an ugly son is a gift for the parents). Looks of the son do not matter.

8. *Apna putter jug ton sohna* (p. 31). (One's son is the most beautiful one in the world)

The physical features of a male baby are not essential to make him look handsome.

A symbol of social triumph

9. *Putter mithey mewey, Rub sab nu dewey* (p. 106). (Sons are like sweet fruit, may God bless everyone with them). Metaphorical representation through sweet fruit, which is one of the most wished-for blessings.

10. *Ya putron ya dhutron, ya dharriyon ya gharrion, ya godiyon ya dhidd nachorriyon* (p. 392). (To earn riches and wealth one needs to have either talented sons or animals or to rob or snub someone or be stingy and starving).

11. *Puttran dey potrey ee nhi maan* (p. 107). (Even the nappies of the sons are valuable). The importance of the sons' presence is emphasized through the mention of the clothes which are used to wipe and cleanse them.

12. *Puttran diyan mawan dey wadey wadey jeeray* (p. 107). (The mothers of sons feel the strength in their motherhood). The motherhood and its strength are being conditioned with the birth and presence of sons instead of children beyond their biological and sexual differences.

13. *Putreen paagh, koi lyawey lakriyan koi lyawey saag* (p. 108). (The sons help complete different households by bringing firewood and the eatable vegetables). The benefits of having sons are reinforced in this proverb by mentioning different tasks that more than one son can perform simultaneously.

14. *Khasam putter nal howey, bhawen barhan kohan da ujaar howey* (p. 187). (The husband and son must accompany a lady even if she is in a deserted land of twelve miles).

Education

15. *Putter perrhaya bhala tey kamad peerrya bhala* (p. 106) (A son is better sent to get an education, and the sugar cane should be crushed to juice). The education of sons is advised as something beneficial and fruitful for the parents in the long run.

Advice about marriage

16. *Putter wyahiye war war, dhee wyahiye ikko war* (p. 107) (Sons should get married again and again, and daughter should get married only once). Two different conditions for sons and daughters regarding their marriage/s are proposed. Polygamy is recommended for sons and banned for daughters even though the religion of mostly Punjabi people does not impose any such conditions.

Handling the misconduct

17. *Putter hoe nadaan tey beh samjhaiye, dhee hoe nadan tey nadi rurraiye* (p. 107) (If a son commits a mistake, it's better to advise and counsel him calmly, but if a daughter does the same, throw her (to die) into the river). Two opposite reactions are advised for the same type of mistakes by children based on their gender.

Death

18. *Putter marey nhi bhuldey, bhawen ho k maran faqeer* (p. 106). (It is not possible to forget a son even if he dies after becoming a beggar). Unconditional love for the sons is shown in this proverb that no matter what, sons are dear to their parents in every situation.

19. *Puttran baajh na jug tey nam roshan* (p. 107) (After sons' death, no one will continue the race and name). Sons are the custodians of posterity and responsible for keeping the father's name alive in this world after him.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the depiction of children as sons and daughters in the Punjabi society's oral literature with the perspective of FCDA (Lazar, 2005), which looks at gender-based inequalities and the perpetuation of patriarchal tendencies in traditional societies through different discursive practices. It has evaluated the time-tested discursive and near indelible cultural markers and how they reflect the gender-based identities of children. Therefore, it determines the significant role performed by these proverbs in the psychological and social construction of childhood identities. Identities and then ideologies are constructed through RSA (Repressive State Apparatuses) and ISA (Ideological State Apparatuses) (Althusser, 1971). Language falls under ISA as it works on the subconscious level and under the cloak of innocuous social and casual talk (Gramsci, 1971; Butler, 2004, and Lazar, 2005). To perpetuate Yusuf's (2005) findings of linguistic sexism, three main types are identified during the analysis of Punjabi proverbs about sons and daughters: daughters are disregarded, mentioned as insignificant, and sometimes wholly denigrated (p. 8).

The main argument of this article is that the asymmetrical gendered relationships among the Punjabi people have their establishment in the early years of babyhood, a formative period. The seeds of lifelong beliefs and attitudes are sown in childhood through reiterative discursive practices, and children learn how to see themselves and their siblings. The societal prejudice finds a dominant place in Punjabi proverbs that it is more rewarding to be a mother/father of sons than of daughters. This asymmetrical attitude begins with the very birth of children. The birth of boys is taken as a blessing and reward and compared with the rising moon, which cannot be hidden. Even the natural process of baby birth is mentioned as no one can give birth to sons while copying others, everything else is possible.

Punjabi proverbs consistently create and reinforce the concept of a privileged position for baby boys and their parents, especially mothers. An even larger number of baby boys and baby girls are associated with the concept of bigger blessing and bigger adversities, respectively. These findings are similar to the ones reached by Kiyimba (2005) about Luganda proverb, "One who will become a favorite begins by giving birth to a baby boy" (p. 255). A wife is advised in one proverb not to give birth to only one boy as a larger number of sons are required to maintain the family and husband's power. On the other

hand, the girl child is considered as some calamity and a constant source of worry and humiliation. Her birth is mentioned as some sort of mourning or funeral. The mother of a girl child is despised and given a lower status than the mothers of baby boys. Additionally, the elder son is given great respect and cherished as a blessing of God (Nadil, Sultan, and Kaker, 2018).

Another aspect is the segregation made among children based on their physical appearance and gender. A girl child is considered a bigger burden when she is not good looking. Her good looks could help get her married to an eligible guy, but if she is not attractive, the parents have to give her a large dowry and other items to compensate her average looks. She is metaphorically compared with 'poison' for the parents. On the other hand, a Punjabi proverb mentions that even an ugly son would be dear to the parents and family, and his ugly looks do not matter at all (Bajwa 2011). The idea behind these proverbs is that the beauty of a baby girl makes her future access to resources a bit easier while boys need to be talented and earning to make a mark; their looks are not of much value. Cameron (2006) concurs, "one legitimate goal for language and gender scholarship is political: to contribute to the wider struggle against unjust and oppressive gender relations, by revealing and challenging the ideological propositions which support and naturalize those relations" (p. 16).

Furthermore, the brought up, growth and even food of the babies are seen differently in Punjabi proverbs. The boys' brought up is compared with taking care of mango trees, and that of girls with self-growing thorny bushes that do not require any special care and, in the end, do not give any fruit or benefit by becoming a support to the family. It is believed that the food given to girls is like watering the sand, and that given to boys is like watering a crop field, which will prove beneficial in the long run. Boys are believed as youthful beings at the very moment of their birth. Another important aspect is the attachment of social triumph and gratification with being parents of male babies and the absence of any positive feelings with the birth of daughters. The increasing number of sons is highly desirable, and the increasing number of daughters is the symbol of being in great calamity and distress (Khan, 2015; Ntshinga, 2015).

Additionally, girls are portrayed as guests and outsiders whose stay is temporary at the parents' place, and it is said that even kings' daughters cannot stay with them forever. At the same time, a beggar can have sons forever. Married daughters are mentioned as neighbors, not as family members. Another aspect is the death of babies and the related beliefs mentioned in Punjabi proverbs according to their gender. The death of a baby girl is depicted as something casual and an insignificant loss while that of a baby boy as a great loss and deprivation for the parents. Being believed to be outsiders, daughters

are advised to be given a dowry, which they would take to their husbands' homes, and the sons would be given all the wealth and property as the legal and logical heirs to their fathers.

Furthermore, daughters are considered as something material whose ownership is in the hands of parents and brothers (Sharifi and Nakhavaly, 2013). They are compared and bracketed with lifeless objects and even animals to portray different connotations attached to them. The most prevalent animal imagery attached to girls is that of sparrow and nightingale to convey their innocence, meekness, and powerlessness. They are bracketed and compared with wealth, arrow, and land to increase their objectification. It echoes the findings of a proverbial study by Kiyimba, 'A female child is like a Mutuba tree, it is harvested by one who did not plant it' (2005, p. 258). On the other hand, animal imagery (camel, lion, tiger) associated with boys is used to connote their strength and powerfulness as well as their supportive character. According to Lazar (2005), a dual function is performed by semantic derogation and subjugation in discursive practices: feminine subservience is hypothesized as well as sanctioned (p. 23).

To add one more theme, the right to get quality education and other fundamental human rights are ascribed to baby boys only in the selected Punjabi proverbs, while girls are excluded from these. Furthermore, it is advised in the proverbs to deal with the mischief of daughter and son differently if they commit one. The boy should be counseled and forgiven softly, while the girl should be sentenced to death in response to any immoral or socially unacceptable act.

The concept of 'honor' is attached with daughters and sisters only, and any deviant act on their part can ruin the repute of the family, so the Punjabi proverbs advise to keep them inside and restrict their interaction and movement (Bajwa, 2011; Khan, Mustafa and Ali, 2017).

As far as marriage is concerned, Punjabi proverbs recommend people to get their sons married again and again but their daughters only once. The daughters are advised to stay at their husbands' place until their last breath, no matter how bad their in-laws and husbands treat them. On the other hand, the sons are prohibited from staying at their in-laws' place; instead, they are compared with an animal to depreciate their decision to live there. Additionally, daughters are advised to come to parents' homes when they are happy and never should come to complain and share their sufferings or adverse conditions. Furthermore, the daughters are advised not to create conflict with their husbands and follow whatever they desire, but no parallel advice is imparted to the sons regarding their wives or how to be good husbands (Bajwa, 2011). This research

has concluded that Punjabi proverbs are biased towards male babies positively and towards female babies negatively. A feminist perspective reminds us that many discursive practices (including oral genres), far from being neutral, are gendered in the same way (Lazar, 2009).

It is evident from the above discussion and the outcomes of the comparative analysis that Punjabi proverbs depict the stranglehold of patriarchy in Punjabi society in almost every matter of life concerned with babies starting from birth and ending at death. These proverbs are not just pieces of the language; they mirror the societal beliefs, characteristics, and the sanctioned codes of conduct for different genders. The study has verified the findings revealed by recent gender and proverb scholarships about men and women in different languages around the globe (Nadil, Sultan and Kaker, 2018; Khan, Mustafa and Ali, 2017; Khan, 2015; Rasul, 2015; Hagos, 2015; Sharifi and Nakhavaly, 2013 and Siddiqui, 2013). This study has brought to light the gender ideology of Punjabi speakers as revealed through their folklores, especially proverbs about baby boys and girls turning into men and women. Girls may not consciously react to these proverbs, but it gets logged into their subconscious, transmitting the sense of being the less wanted (Siddiqui, 2013). According to Freire (1998), the persecutors internalize the adverse attitudes towards themselves, which gives birth to self-abnegation in return. The subjugated people become convinced of their worthlessness and inferior status through being frequently informed about their ineffectiveness and unproductiveness (p. 43). Sapiro (1998) even goes to the extent that female attributes perpetuated through the delicate persona, lack of control and unnecessary servile existence subsequently result in extended hegemonic patriarchy as is evident from the critical analysis of the Punjabi proverbs (Rasul, 2013; Khan, Mustafa, and Ali, 2017). The devastating consequence of such a representation is that female children may adopt venomous opinions about themselves and be convinced that they are incapable of completing any significant or worthy task (Lazar, 2005; Nadil, Sultan and Kaker, 2018).

A feminist critique of such gendered social practices and relations is aimed ultimately at effecting social transformation. Analysis of Punjabi proverbs, which show up the workings of power that sustain oppressive social structures/relations, is itself a form of 'analytical resistance' and contributes to ongoing struggles of contestation and change. The social status quo is contested in favor of a just society's feminist humanist vision, in which gender of the children does not predetermine or mediate our relationships with them and attitudes towards them (Lazar, 2005).

Conclusion

After an analytical and comparative analysis, the study concluded that sons are given more importance than daughters. Their birth, food, brought up, growth, education, marriage, moral upbringing, inheritance, and even death are entrenched in patriarchal ideologies. The asymmetrical portrayal and construction of gender-based identities through these proverbs prepare and reinforce the boys and girls to become socially sanctioned men and women. The nature of societal institutions like marriage, politics, economy, and adulthood starts taking shape through these gender-biased discursive patterns when the social actors are just baby boys and girls. These gender-biased attitudes as reflected in Punjabi proverbs need a conscious recheck and policy to create gender parity to make the females of Punjabi society more confident, productive and achieving members instead of just an ‘other’ of the ‘self’ who is dependent and live a life as a burden on the male members.

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