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# Language, Power, and Female Subjugation: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Patriarchal Ideologies in John Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone*

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## *Abstract*

This study investigates a comprehensive Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo to explicate how language constructs, legitimizes, and sustains patriarchal ideologies. The relevance of the study lies in its engagement with cultural practices that continue to affect women, in contemporary African societies. The importance of this work is underscored by the persistence of traditional norms that restrict female autonomy despite legal and social advancements. The study is informed by the problem of gender-based discrimination embedded in cultural practices, especially in contexts where tradition is used to justify inequality. Drawing on Michelle Lazar's feminist framework, the study analyzes fifteen purposively selected textual excerpts through detailed line-by-line coding. The findings reveal that gendered subjugation is discursively enacted through lexicalization, modality, representation, ideology, and speech acts that naturalize male dominance and delegitimize female authority. The findings reveal that Kargbo uses the narrative to expose the harmful effects of certain cultural norms and to advocate for reform. The study contributes to African feminist literary scholarship by foregrounding discourse as a critical site of ideological reproduction and resistance. In addition, this study emphasizes the complementarity of language and Drama as they exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship: language gives

structure and meaning to drama, while drama animates and contextualizes language through performance and human interaction

**Keywords:** Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, patriarchy, discourse, African drama, gender, power

## *Introduction*

Language and drama are deeply complementary because language serves as the primary medium through which drama is created, expressed, and interpreted. Drama relies on language to convey emotions, conflicts, themes, characterization, and social realities, while language gains vitality and performative power through dramatic expression. According to Evans (2026), he says that language is used to justify or describe a dramatic interpretation. In describing the vital functions of language, Ibitoye and Abolarin-Egbebiola (2025) opine that apart from other important roles of language, social functions are accomplished with the use of language. In corroborating the importance of language, Ibitoye and Dada (2023), argue that language can be described as indispensable for human beings and that is why it is referred to as human specific.

Drama, as a genre of literature, can be regarded as the most effective form of literature because it helps to give life to ideas. In addition, it is unambiguously a prevailing form of artistic expression in addressing social issues such as patriarchy and gender discrimination. Nwafor (2019:88) posits that "the position of drama is to view and perceive society in its nakedness and proffer solutions where necessary". African dramatic literature dwells in a dire space by cross-examining social ills, particularly those relating to gender, dominance, and female subjugation. Cross examination and analysis of these ills can only be conveyed through language and that is why Harran et al (2023) argues that construction of gender identity and how this reflects male dominance and violence in Africa is expressed with language use. Within this tradition, Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone* offers a captivating dramatization of Madam Yoko's rise and tragic demise within a deeply patriarchal and colonially mediated society.

In African literature commonly, patriarchy and subjugation of women have become issues that continue to generate public discourse among different scholars. Ibitoye and Abolarin-Egbebiola (2025) contend that the media and literary world often perpetuate patriarchal norms, victim-blaming, and implicit biases through their reports. Similarly, Tamez (2025) says that patriarchal structures have traditionally dominated women thereby limiting their contributions to the development of the society. Batool and Hayat (2025) also mention the dangers attached to Patriarchal systems by asserting that it exercises a deep influence on societal structures, frequently reducing women to second-class citizens. Adebambe (2025) says that women are lowered in every aspect of life and prevented from having equal opportunities with their male equals. While previous studies have explored themes of

leadership, betrayal, and colonial interference using literary texts, the linguistic construction of gendered power relations using feminist critical discourse analysis remains underexplored. This study argues that patriarchy in the play is not simply represented but actively produced and sustained through discourse. Language functions as a mechanism of domination, encoding ideological assumptions about gender roles and capabilities. According to Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, developed in 1990, she maintains that patriarchy is crucial for the study of gender inequalities by defining it as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. She goes further to highlight six patriarchal configurations that support male domination. The identified patriarchal structures are the state, paid work, patriarchal relationships with households, patriarchal culture, sexuality, and male violence toward women (Walby, 1990). From Ibitoye's perspective (2026), she says that patriarchy is devastatingly common around the world, and it is more prevalent in Africa because of the culture and traditional beliefs, she asserts that the system of patriarchy encourages the perpetuation of women's suppression around the world and archaic practices that suggest that a woman's role in the society is inferior to that of a man.

The study situates itself within feminist discourse studies, claiming that power operates through everyday language, shaping perceptions of legitimacy, authority, and identity. In recent decades, feminist theory has increasingly interrogated not only what is said but how and where speech is performed. By applying Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the research uncovers how discourse naturalizes inequality and constrains resistance. The study's centrality in the thematic preoccupation of Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone*, as well as many emergent dramatists, is not unexpected in a society where patriarchy and cultural practices persist. Feminism and African culture are always in clash, because African culture is perceived by feminists as being responsible for deeper penetration of patriarchy and subjugation of women as men tend to use culture as a weapon and instrument for enacting prejudices and discrimination against women by supporting the fact that African women are not to be seen or heard.

Literature, generally, provides an avenue for exploring the socio-cultural and socio-political issues facing society. Playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ahmed Yerima , Gcina Mhlophe, Adong Lucy Judith, Fatima Dikehence, Seffi Atta among others, have continued to interrogate challenges, especially gender inequality, facing the African continent having known that different regions in the continent possess distinct challenges confronting them, hence, writers from such regions often illustrate the challenges in their literary works. Literature is a powerful ideological tool that both reflects and shapes social realities. In dramatic texts, language is performative because it enacts power relations through dialogue, characterization, and narrative framing (Aiolfi, 2025). In John Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone*, the use of language by the characters reinforces patriarchal norms by positioning men as natural leaders, framing women as subordinate and emotional and regulating female speech and behavior. Thus, literature becomes a site where gender ideology is both reproduced and contested (Deckard, 2024).

Drama in Africa has an intense and distinct history, rooted in traditional storytelling, rituals, and communal gatherings. It is a cultural sensation that echoes Africans' traditions, creating a platform that is accessible and inclusive for all. Drama goes beyond social and educational boundaries, making it an effective tool for advocacy, awareness and activism. Dramas possess the ability to engage audiences through compelling narratives and emotional connections which tend towards addressing complex challenges like Patriarchy in an impactful manner. Performances centered on the theme of Patriarchy aim to expose the challenge, clarify its implications, seek empathy and identification, provoke thought, foster dialogue, and inspire change.

Numerous studies have been conducted to analyze gender inequality and patriarchy through language, however, not much has been done on the persistence of traditional norms that restrict female autonomy despite legal and social advancements with the application of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework using LEX = Lexicalization, MOD = Modality, SA = Speech Act, REP = Representation and IDEO = Ideology as the coding scheme. This study uses the FCDA as its core analytical and theoretical tool, because the study focuses on the use of language by the characters as a site to underpin female subjugation and relegation, thus, studying the mechanisms through which women in the drama sustain and confront unequal power structures via discourse, hence, FCDA becomes the appropriate and apt analytical lens for such an inquiry. Mahmood et al, (2026) posits that while critical discourse analysis (CDA) primarily looks into the investigation of resistance and power relations in media and social texts, FCDA specifically centers on gender as a central analytical category, making it particularly relevant for this study. There have been several works on FCDA and CDA research on the resistance of women and other minority groups in the literature and media, but this study is informed by the problem of gender-based discrimination embedded in cultural practices as evident in literary text, especially in contexts where tradition and culture are employed to justify inequality. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature by exploring the manner at which Kargbo uses the drama, *Let Me Die Alone*, to expose the harmful effects of certain cultural norms and to advocate for reform. The study contributes to African feminist literary scholarship by foregrounding discourse as a critical site of ideological reproduction and resistance. In addition, this study emphasizes the complementarity of language and Drama as they exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship: language gives structure and meaning to drama, while drama animates and contextualizes language through performance and human interaction.

**Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the study is to investigate a comprehensive Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo to examine how language constructs, legitimizes, and sustains patriarchal ideologies

To achieve this aim, the study considers the following objectives:

- Examine how language constructs female subjugation
- Analyze discursive strategies that delegitimize female authority

- Identify patterns of resistance and silencing

**Rationale for the Study**

Despite growing feminist scholarship, discursive approaches to African drama using FCDA remain limited. This study enhances the understanding of aesthetics of gender and community theatre in African Drama. It also highlights new perspectives on the application of FCDA to literary analysis. Apart from providing more insight into the study of African Drama, the study contributes to knowledge of how male authors represent women, and how male characters in the drama subjugates and relegates women. This study addresses this gap by:

- Providing micro-level linguistic analysis
- Integrating feminist theory with discourse analysis
- Offering insights relevant to contemporary gender debates

**Author's background and Synopsis of the play**

John Kolosa Kargbo was born on October 25,1959 in Sierra Leone from Mende ethnic group. Kargbo's works focus on Sierra Leonean complex history, culture, identity, and the experiences of the Sierra Leonean people. He later died in 1992, he was one of Sierra Leone's most important modern dramatists and *Let Me Die Alone*, as one of his literary works of art, is a reputable one which was scrupulously explored and proficiently written with the elements of gender inequality and discrimination, power, betrayal, and colonial politics. Though Kargbo died in 1992, the text was first published and compiled in 1996, and it was written in one of the sierra Leone's vernacular known as Krio until it was translated to English. Opeoluwa-Fakoyede (2026) corroborates this by saying that the play beautifully showcases gender discrimination against a female ruler known as Madam Yoko. The setting of the play is the early colonial era in Mende Kingdom in Sierra Leone and it centres on the life and times of Madam Yoko, an illustrious emperor of the Mende tribe. Kargbo depicts the life of this distinguished female ruler as a remarkable, courageous, and ambitious woman who sacrifices her right to become a mother while retaining her sexuality. Yoko's asexual transformation makes her highly spectacular.

The Play is written in three Acts with three scenes for each act. The first act in three scenes, forms the backdrop for the play where the reader gets to meet the characters of chief Gbanya, who is manly in nature as he tries to rape a female character known as Madam Yoko. And this scene inspires the issue of gender inequality whereby Chief Gbanya assumes that a woman is only created to be an object to the man for sexual satisfaction. In Senehun, Mendeland, Sierra Leone and Africa at large, women are not treated as equals of men as they are considered fragile, vulnerable and incapable of managing crises. Gbanya is also seen being worried about the Governor's approaching visit to his community and gets an indication of impending death. His wife Yoko, notices his resignation to death and, she prompts him of his resolution to hand over the chiefdom to her. Lamboi, Musa and Ndapi are typical examples of men in the play who believe that women should be relegated and must never be allowed to occupy positions of authority as Lamboi, is seriously eyeing the chiefdom. Lamboi, who is Yoko's brother, is

interested in the chieftaincy title, he consults Musa, a medicine man who is skilled at the preparation of death concoction to poison Chief Gbanya to avert the transfer of leadership to Yoko, a mere woman. Gbanya gets prepared to receive the governor in a grand style, but was beaten up by the governor's representatives. In his severe state, Lamboi and Musa poison him in the pretense of helping to resuscitate him but his wife takes charge of the chiefdom and resolved never to bear a child.

The second act, comprising of three scenes, presents Yoko as the ruling chief and her grand achievements and prominence are known all over the land and beyond. She is blessed with abundant wisdom with which she judges matters and her rulership is distinct and commendable. The governor sends his messenger to her Highness, Madam Yoko, to monitor the affairs of the state, Yoko in her wisdom, gives the messenger a warm and befitting welcome. Lamboi and Musa are embittered about the fame and commendations, and they plot to pull her down by kidnapping Jeneba, Ndapis daughter and raising alarm that Yoko has used her for ritual which will make her either to die or go into exile.

In the third scene, the governor has given Yoko a leave and sent her to crown two chiefs in Taiama. On embarking on the journey, Yoko hands over the rulership to Lamboi and Musa who conspired to actualize their evil plans by kidnapping Jeneba, kill her, remove her sensitive parts and bury her in the bush. They played on the intelligence of the villagers by lying to them that Yoko has used Jeneba for ritual. Coupled with this, Yoko becomes more frustrated when a messenger brings a letter from the governor informing her that the Bouiday order has been laid by the District Commissioner on the Governor's order, therefore, Yoko must cease from being in charge of the Chiefdom since the Chiefdom has been given to another region. Yoko feels humiliated, used and dumped by the governor and she decides to die alone by committing suicide through the intake of poison. In her words while dying, she says "And I'll experience tranquility now. I promise not to be used again. This is not the world I brought a child into. Thus, let no one lament my passing" (Kagbo, pp 82)

**Theoretical and Analytical Framework: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)**

FCDA as a theoretical framework is influenced by the models of Fairclough's (2013) dialectical-relational approach (DRA) which reproduces a transdisciplinary approach to CDA studies. Furthermore, the DRA has also stimulated feminist scrutiny of contemporary popular cultural texts from a sociolinguistic perspective (Lazar, 2007). Hence, Lazar's (2017) feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) showcases a transdisciplinary attempt to reopen gender-issue debates through Critical Discourse Analysis studies. It further focuses on all gendered discourses where women lack power and are being dominated. FCDA, however, focuses on an actual conversational analysis of various restricted situations, which culminate in gender inequality. The choice of FCDA as the theoretical framework for the analysis of the play in this research work, was made because of its focus on social emancipation of women and the manner at which it glues feminism with critical discourse analysis impeccably.

FCDA scrutinizes how discourse sustains gender inequality and it is also a research convention that focuses on language and ideology in examining how various gender hierarchies are

constructed as natural (Lazar, 2007). According to Lazar, the necessity to focus on the feminist viewpoint and language in discourses arose after the third wave of feminism and this led to the conception of FCDA, which contests the existing discourses on gender inequality as well as the gender hierarchy and emphasizes more devotion on marginalised women and stereotypes. With the emergence of FCDA, there is a noticeable transformation in the patriarchal system and traditional social orders in society.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not concerned with investigating language as a fixed linguistic entity but in studying social and discursive processes and their consequences. FCDA is one of the theoretical and methodological frameworks under the canopy term of CDA. CDA is basically used to interpret discourse as a social practice, which has a specific purpose.

Simply put, undertaking a CDA of drama involves investigating the role of language in the (re)production of social inequality and dominance in society. FCDA concentrates on how language is used, discourses are found within language, and knowledge is created through these discourses. It is through discourses that readers or listeners get to know actors or characters better. This is supported by O'Halloran (2022) in her analysis of the relationship between CDA and language cognition by describing CDA as an interdisciplinary study of issues of language manipulation with the exploration of the interpretation stage of CDA for students in areas such as English language, media studies and applied linguistics.

Fairclough (2016) identifies three central tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis namely: social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity and gender); culture (the generally accepted norms of behaviour in the society); and discourse (the words we use). Out of the three central tenets mentioned above, the one that is relevant to this work is the third one which is discourse. The major concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis are how discourse is shaped and constructed by relations of ideology, power and systems of knowledge or belief and how texts are used to maintain or create social inequalities through representation of so-called reality which are not explicit to discourse participants. This study was necessitated because there has not been an application of FCDA to Kargbo's *Let me die alone*

**Methodology**

The study investigates a comprehensive Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo to examine how language constructs, legitimizes, and sustains patriarchal ideologies. To achieve this, the study uses Lazar's FCDA as the analytical framework because it is well-suited as it examines how gendered ideological operations are enacted in discourse and how women reproduce or resist patriarchal ideology through specific linguistic, nonverbal, and narrative practices (Creswell &Creswell, 2017). This research aims to examine the relationship between language and gender disparities in *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo by utilizing Qualitative textual analysis research design.

**Data collection**

The choice of data collection was made using literary text because, the drama explicitly provides answers to the objectives guiding this research work. The suitability of the data was

checked to ensure the data provides the needed information for the research objectives before the choice was made. Several literary texts were read and, from the texts read, *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo overtly describe the predicaments faced by women in Sierra Leone and Africa generally.

**Data Selection**

The core data were extracted from *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo. The extracted data explicitly depict female characters' interactions with, representations of, or discursive positioning within patriarchal or postcolonial structures. Extracts were chosen based on two main criteria:

- *Thematic relevance to the FCDA*: Passages that exemplify power asymmetry, gendered expectations, silence, negotiation of identity, or discursive resistance.
- *Presence of analyzable linguistic features:* Texts in which language forms play a discernible role in constructing gendered meanings.

This purposive sampling approach ensured that the data were directly relevant to the research aim and the FCDA's analytical objectives**.** In the text, 15 excerpts were purposively selected with a line-by-line FCDA coding

**Data analysis**

The data analysis process for this research work was conducted systematically using the FCDA as the methodological and analytical approach. Within the framework of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), this study adopts Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis as the principal analytical approach for examining language use and the discursive construction of gendered meanings in the selected text. Fairclough's model provides a systematic framework for analysing the relationship between language, power, ideology, and social structures through three interconnected dimensions: the textual level, the discursive practice level, and the social practice level. In line with feminist scholarship, the study pays particular attention to how linguistic choices reproduce, negotiate, or challenge patriarchal ideologies, gender hierarchies, and unequal power relations embedded within social and cultural contexts.

To operationalise the analysis, a coding scheme was developed to identify recurring linguistic and discursive patterns relevant to feminist inquiry with the following Coding Scheme:

- LEX = Lexicalization
- MOD = Modality
- SA = Speech Act
- REP = Representation
- IDEO = Ideology

**Lexicalization (LEX)**

Lexicalization refers to the choice and use of words or vocabulary within a text or discourse. It examines how specific lexical items are deliberately selected to construct meanings, shape

perceptions, and represent social actors or events in particular ways. Word choices reveal attitudes, biases, stereotypes, emotional undertones, or ideological positions embedded in discourse.

**Modality (MOD)**

Modality refers to the linguistic expression of certainty, obligation, possibility, necessity, permission, or attitude within discourse. It reflects the speaker's or writer's level of commitment, authority, or perspective toward a statement. Modal expressions often appear through modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, *may*, *can*, or *might*. In discourse analysis, modality is important because it reveals power relations, authority, and ideological positioning

**Speech Act (SA)**

Speech Act refers to the communicative function or intended action performed through language. Drawing from speech act theory, language is understood not merely as conveying information but as performing actions such as commanding, apologising, requesting, promising, warning, accusing, or persuading. In feminist discourse analysis, speech acts help reveal how authority, dominance, resistance, persuasion, or gender expectations are enacted through communication. They also show how language can reinforce or challenge unequal social relations

**Representation (REP)**

Representation refers to how individuals, groups, identities, or social realities are portrayed within discourse. It examines who is given visibility, agency, authority, or voice, and how certain groups are characterised through language. In feminist analysis, representation is particularly concerned with how women and men are depicted within social, political, cultural, or institutional contexts. Representation analysis therefore, explores whether discourse reinforces stereotypes and marginalisation or promotes inclusive and empowering portrayals.

**Ideology (IDEO)**

Ideology refers to the system of beliefs, values, assumptions, and power structures embedded within discourse. Ideologies often appear as "common sense" ideas that shape how people understand society, identity, gender, class, race, or authority. In Critical Discourse Analysis, ideology is central because discourse both reflects and reproduces dominant social structures. Feminist analysis specifically investigates patriarchal ideologies that normalise male dominance, gender inequality, and social exclusion.

The coding scheme was generated from coding categories such as lexical choices, modality, representation, evaluative language, and ideological framing. These categories enable the study to systematically examine how women are represented, how power relations are enacted through language, and how discourses of gender, resistance, subordination, and identity are constructed and sustained. The coding process further draws attention to implicit assumptions,

cultural norms, and institutional discourses that shape the production and interpretation of meaning within the texts.

At the textual level, the analysis focuses on vocabulary, sentence structures, pronoun usage, tone, and rhetorical devices that reveal gendered assumptions and relations of power. At the level of discursive practice, attention is paid to processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, including the socio-cultural contexts influencing the interpretation of the discourse. Finally, at the level of social practice, the study interrogates the broader ideological and sociopolitical structures within which the discourse operates, particularly the ways patriarchal systems and gendered inequalities are normalised or contested through language. Through this integrated coding framework, the study demonstrates how discourse functions as a site of both domination and resistance within feminist socio-cultural realities.

**FCDA Analysis, Findings and Result.**

The results of the textual analysis reveal that Madam Yoko in the play is often the victim of discursive violence and patriarchal power. The Identification of theme and discursive patterns was guided by the objectives of study and in total, six common discursive patterns were identified in *Let Me Die Alone* by John Kargbo, namely, (1) Naturalization of Female Inferiority (2) Delegitimization of Female Authority, (3) Control of Female Sexuality and Body, (4) Silencing and Discursive Control, (5) Colonial-Patriarchal Intersection, and (6)Resistance and Counter-Discourse.

**Theme 1: Naturalization of Female Inferiority**

**Excerpt 1 "**A woman cannot rule men."

- LEX: Gender binary
- MOD: "cannot" (absolute)
- REP: Women as incapable
- IDEO: Naturalized inequality

This theme of naturalization of female inferiority, the first excerpt contains four out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, MOD, REP and IDEO. The sentence "A woman cannot rule men" (Kagbo,pp 42) reflects gendered lexicalization that reinforces patriarchal assumptions about femininity, and this exemplifies both gender and social inequalities. In reference to the transfer of the leadership mantle to Madam Yoko by Chief Gbanya before his death. The word "cannot" is under Modality category which refers to the linguistic expression of certainty of negativity. By representation, it means how women are portrayed in the sentence which exemplifies male dominance and female subjugation, the sentence **"**A woman cannot rule men" portrays the representation of women as incapable to lead which clearly shows the relegation of women as a second class citizen who are not equal to men but seen as inferior. Lastly, Ideology uncovers hidden power relations and examines how language contributes to the maintenance of social realities, and the sentence here suggests patriarchal ideology,

**Excerpt 2** "It is against nature for a woman to lead warriors."

- LEX: "nature" (biological appeal)
- IDEO: Essentialism
- SA: Declarative authority

The second excerpt under the above theme contains three out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, SA and IDEO. The sentence "It is against nature for a woman to lead warriors." (Kagbo,pp 43) is still reflecting the deviancy of Lanboi and Musa in permitting Madam Yoko to the inheritance of Chiefdom. The specific lexical items in the sentence show that they are deliberately selected to reinforce a biological appeal showing women demotion, that it is even against nature for a woman to lead warriors as a woman cannot be a warrior since she is a weaker vessel. Ideologically, the sentence coveys the fact that essentially women are not created bravely and from the perspective of Speech Act, the sentence reveals male authority and dominance through speech.

**Excerpt 3** "Women are meant for the home, not the throne."

- LEX: "meant" (destiny framing)
- REP: Domestic confinement
- IDEO: Gender role fixation

The excerpt above is the last one culled from the literary text under the above theme and it contains three out of the five coding scheme which are LEX, REP and IDEO. The sentence "Women are meant for the home, not the throne." (Kagbo,pp 49) is as a response to the handing over of the chieftancy position to Madam Yoko. According to lexicalization in Critical Discourse Analysis as a discursive tool, the lexical item 'meant' in the sentence showcases women destiny framing in Africa where they must not be seen or heard. The sentence represents women as a domestic object that should only be used at home and not be seen occupying leadership positions. Ideologically, the sentence exemplifies the gender roles fixation where men are assigned gender roles that make them future leaders while women are confined and limited to gender roles within the household.

**Theme 2: Delegitimization of Female Authority**

**4.2.1 Excerpt 4** "She may sit on the throne, but she is still a woman."

- LEX: Contrast "but"
- REP: Authority undermined
- IDEO: Conditional legitimacy

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In analyzing the theme of Delegitimization of Female Authority, the first excerpt contains three out of the five coding scheme which are LEX, REP and IDEO. The sentence "She may sit on the throne, but she is still a woman." (Kagbo,pp 55) echoes that Madam Yoko holds the highest position of power, which is the throne in the community, but her gender does not

change just because of that. This reflects a belief in Africa as patriarchal society, that a woman's authority is limited by her gender. The lexical word "but" exemplifies the fact that even though she has official power, she is judged by gendered expectations, biases, and restrictions as a woman which also representatively undermines Madam Yoko's authority as a chief because she is a woman. The entire sentence, specifically with the word "but", ideologically displays conditional legitimacy. This is a gender bias that implies that power does not automatically erase sexism despite Madam Yoko's decision to be androgynous.

**Excerpt 5** "Her rule is a mistake the elders must correct."

- SA: Directive
- REP: Female leadership as error
- IDEO: Patriarchal correction
- LEX: Mistake

The second excerpt under the above theme contains four out of the five coding schemes which are SA, REP, LEX and IDEO. The sentence "Her rule is a mistake the elders must correct." (Kagbo,pp 61) represents how Madam Yoko's enemies, especially the male elders, view her leadership. No matter how effective she is, they frame her rule as unnatural and believe she must be removed to correct what they see as a break from tradition. This represents the perception of female leadership as an error in Africa; hence, it is not about her competence, it is about gender and tradition. The lexical item "correct" makes it sound like a moral duty, which makes the opposition feel justified and accentuates the ideology of patriarchal correction. By speech act, there is a directive from the sentence displaying that a woman on the throne goes against custom and a wrong situation.

**Excerpt 6** "No woman has ever ruled without chaos."

- MOD: Generalization
- IDEO: Historical distortion
- REP: Women as disorderly

The excerpt above is the third excerpt under the second theme and it contains three out of the five coding schemes which are MOD, REP and IDEO. The sentence "No woman has ever ruled without chaos." (Kagbo,pp 66) under modality, is a generalization and it is a statement of gendered prejudice which concludes that whenever a woman rules, disorder and trouble always follow. Ideologically, it shows historical distortion which ignores examples of stable female rulers and frames Madam Yoko's struggles as proof, while blaming her for problems caused by betrayal, colonial interference, and sexism. This sentence captures how patriarchal societies often frame female leadership as inherently destabilizing thereby representing women as totally disorderly

**Theme 3: Control of Female Sexuality and Body**

**Excerpt 7** "A barren woman cannot lead a nation."

- LEX: "barren" (stigmatizing)
- REP: Reduction to biology
- IDEO: Fertility = legitimacy

Control of female sexuality and body is the third theme and discursive pattern that emerged in this study. In probing this theme, the first excerpt contains three out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP and IDEO. The sentence "A barren woman cannot lead a nation." (Kagbo,pp 58) exemplifies the ways African society regulate, restrict, and impose what women can do with their own bodies and sexual lives. This serves as a foundational concept for patriarchy in gender studies and this is evident in Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone,* hence a major reason for the choice of the literary text for this study. The lexical item "barren" is stigmatizing, in relation to representation and ideology, fertility has suddenly become a criterion for leadership. Regulating female body by men is a way to control female power and this limits Yoko's political, economic, and social independence

**Excerpt 8** "Her body has failed her; how can she lead others?"

- REP: Body as failure
- IDEO: Biological determinism
- LEX: Failed her

Excerpt 8 is the second under the theme above and it contains three out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP and IDEO. The sentence, "Her body has failed her; how can she lead others?" (Kagbo,pp 60) contains lexical items that undermine Madam Yoko's authority by linking her physical and reproductive state to her fitness to lead. Ideologically, this can be referred to as biological determinism which means that since her body has failed in a "womanly" role which is attached to childbearing or motherhood, then she is represented as unfit for leadership. This explains Madam Yoko's experience after she joined Poro society and since the rule of Poro means she cannot bear children. Her male opponents use that to say she has "failed" as a woman, so she cannot be trusted with power over men.

**Excerpt 9** "A woman without a child has no future."

- LEX: "no future" (erasure)
- IDEO: Reproductive destiny
- REP: No child no future

Lastly, the last excerpt under the theme above embodies three out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP and IDEO. The sentence, "A woman without a child has no future." (Kagbo,pp 63) exhibits the status of women in an African society whereby if you do not have a child, you represent failure and the sentence also demonstrates the cost women pay for being

in a leadership role and the societal pressure that accompanies such ambition. In the play, Madam Yoko gains political power but loses her biological future. The sentence exhibits patriarchy in Africa where the society define a woman's value and security through motherhood. Motherhood is viewed as a core part of womanhood and without it, a woman is perceived as incomplete, cursed, or less respected, no matter what else she achieved, hence, women's worth is tied to reproduction, not individual achievement.

**Theme 4: Silencing and Discursive Control**

**Excerpt 10** "Enough! A woman speaks too much."

- SA: Command
- REP: Female speech excessive
- IDEO: Silencing mechanism
- LEX: enough

Silencing and discursive control is the fourth identified theme during data analysis process for this study. Under this theme, there emerged four excerpts and the first one is "Enough! A woman speaks too much." (Kagbo,pp 70). This excerpt embodies four out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP, SA and IDEO. Silencing and Discursive Control are employed to be used against Madam Yoko when she argues, gives orders, or defends her rulership as a Chief. The sentence represents the fact that women are not meant to be heard or seen by policing the boundary of who is allowed to have a public voice. Ideologically, silencing mechanism is a patriarchal tool showing that in African culture, a "good" woman should be quiet and only speak when spoken to. The lexical item 'enough' is a silencing tactic by cutting her off not because of what she said, but because she is a woman. In Speech act, the command given to her is simply a gendered double standard which is patriarchal because when a man speak at length, it is seen as being assertive and wise, but when it is a woman, it is otherwise

**Excerpt 11** "Let the men decide; this is not your place."

- SA: Exclusion
- REP: Women as outsiders
- IDEO: Gendered authority
- LEX: this is not your place

Still on the analysis of the theme on silencing and discursive control, the excerpt above comprises four out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP, SA and IDEO in the sentence "Let the men decide; this is not your place." (Kagbo, pp 71). The sentence expresses the height of gender inequality which is linguistically expressed. This implies gatekeeping power and draws a hard line between "male" and "female" domains. If further represents the fact that men are decision makers whereby women are expected to be outsiders and are to remain at the domestic sphere. This is the experience of Madam Yoko in the play whereby she has legal authority, but the men refuse to grant her legitimacy. Ideologically, this is gendered

authority and from speech Act, she is excluded, even though, she holds the title of chief, the real decision-making power still belongs to men. This apparently reduces her role to symbolic or ceremonial.

**Excerpt 12** "Your voice brings trouble."

- REP: Voice = danger
- IDEO: Suppression of dissent
- LEX: Trouble

The last excerpt under this theme encompasses three out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP, and IDEO. "Your voice brings trouble" (Kagbo, pp 69) in the play, comes up when Madam Yoko challenges male elders or gives orders, her voice threatens the existing hierarchy, so they refer to it as "trouble. The lexical item "trouble" in the play is not caused by Madam Yoko's voice, but it is caused by men reacting badly to a woman having a voice, hence the voice is represented as danger. Ideologically, when a woman's voice inherently causes trouble, then she is positioned as a destabilizing force. This apparently makes it easier to justify silencing and removing Madam Yoko from the helms of affairs.

**Theme 5: Colonial-Patriarchal Intersection**

**Excerpt 13** "You rule because we permit it."

- SA: Assertion
- MOD: Conditional power
- IDEO: Colonial dominance
- LEX: Permit

The fifth theme which is colonial-patriarchal intersection, contains just two excerpts. The first except is "You rule because we permit it." (Kagbo pp74) and it possesses four coding schemes which are LEX, REP, SA and IDEO. The sentence categorically displays how two systems of control namely colonial authority and male patriarchy overlap to limit Madam Yoko's power being a typical African woman which shows the double burden a black woman bear. Colonialism used patriarchal norms to manage indirect rule, and patriarchy used colonial backing to keep women like Madam Yoko from having autonomous power, she is caught between two hierarchies that both see her as subordinate. The lexical item 'permit' shows male dominance while modality shows Madam Yoko's conditional power. Ideologically, the sentence shows patriarchy by saying that she has no inherent right to rule and the right to grant or revoke a woman's authority is in the hands of the men who are superiors. The theme clarifies the fact that colonial masters ruled through "male" chiefs and councils because they preferred dealing with men and this widened the gender gap during post colonialism. Both systems of colonialism and patriarchy in the play agree that, Madam Yoko's power is borrowed, not owned

**Excerpt 14** "The British crown decides who leads here."

- REP: External authority
- IDEO: Colonial override
- LEX: British crown

Excerpt 14 is the second under the theme above and it contains three out of the five coding schemes which are REP, LEX and IDEO. The sentence, "The British crown decides who leads here." (Kagbo,pp 78) illustrates the fact that even if a chief is African, his or her power is borrowed and conditional. 'British' and 'crown' as lexical items in the sentence shows external authority of the colonial masters which shows that they override all decisions ideologically. Madam Yoko, as a female character in the play, must manage two sources of legitimacy, which are British recognition and acceptance from her own people.

**Theme 6: Resistance and Counter-Discourse**

**Excerpt 15 (Yoko)** "I have fought, I have led, I have earned this throne."

- SA: Assertion
- REP: Active agency
- IDEO: Merit-based legitimacy
- LEX: fought, led earned

Resistance and counter-discourse is the sixth identified theme during data analysis process for this study. Under this theme, there emerged just one excerpt "I have fought, I have led, I have earned this throne." (Kagbo,pp 82). This excerpt embodies four out of the five coding schemes which are LEX, REP, SA and IDEO. The lexical items assert female agency in a space that denies it. By uttering the sentence, Madam Yoko inserts herself into the male-defined domain of kingship. The sentence shows assertion in Speech Act; she is not asking to be included but stating that she already did the work. The sentence is referred to as a counter-discourse because it uses their logic against them as patriarchal and colonial systems claim to value strength, leadership, and service. Madam Yoko says they should judge her by those standards if they value those things, then they must recognize her because she demonstrated them which justifies her merit-based legitimacy ideologically. Affirming that she is a fighter, a leader, a ruler who earned it, represents active agency and the right to define herself.

The analysis above reveals that patriarchal ideology is sustained through linguistic naturalization by showing how nature and tradition present inequality as inevitable, discursive delegitimization whereby female authority is consistently undermined through contrastive structures and negative framing, biological reductionism where women are reduced to reproductive functions, limiting their political legitimacy, silencing mechanisms where commands and interruptions regulate female speech, colonial reinforcement where colonial discourse amplifies patriarchal control and constrained resistance

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that Kagbo's *Let Me Die Alone* encodes patriarchal ideology through complex discursive strategies and successfully examined how language constructs female subjugation, analyze discursive strategies that delegitimize female authority and identify patterns of resistance and silencing. Language functions as a powerful tool for constructing gender hierarchies, legitimizing male dominance and suppressing female agency. This study emphasizes the complementarity of language and drama as they exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship: language gives structure and meaning to drama, while drama animates and contextualizes language through performance and human interaction.

The findings contribute to feminist discourse analysis by highlighting how language, gender, and power intersect during and after colonial periods. Moreover, the study situates these literary findings in dialogue with real-life feminist struggles. This study has attempted to bring to the awareness of the African society of the existence of male dominance and patriarchy, which has implications on the continent as a whole. This was made possible through the study of Kargbo's *let me die alone* using a FCDA approach. It is seen in the play that the black female protagonist, such as Madam Yoko represents black woman in African society as victim of male dominance, oppression and subjugation at the hands of their male counterparts.

The desire of the researcher is to strive to create social awareness for members of society to desist from male dominance and patriarchy by desiring African continent as a society that does not discriminate on the basis of gender and builds a society that fully incorporates women without any discrimination. This effort is a conscious and collective one for both men and women. It entails changing and reshaping the minds of male gender to shun any form of dominance and discrimination. To achieve this, transformative changes are important.

It is therefore highly recommended that feminist discourse awareness in education should be promoted while interdisciplinary gender research is encouraged. Inclusivity is also essential in governance to alleviate gender inequality

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