



## Investigation into the Positive Attributes of Men and Women in English and Palestinian Proverbs

Yusra Shadeed<sup>1,\*</sup> & Aziz Khalil<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract:** Proverbs are an indispensable sociocultural aspect of language; they reflect wisdom, experiences and traditions and have been transmitted across generations. **Objective:** This study investigates the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs, with a particular focus on positive attributes. **Methodology:** The study employed a qualitative approach, and the sample consisted of English and Palestinian proverbs that explicitly or implicitly reference men or women. All proverbs were collected from various resources including books, dictionaries and online sites. Proverbs were thematically categorized focusing on the meaning of these proverbs and the positive personal attributes they reflect. This study adopts Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model to analyze English and Palestinian proverbs. Finally, the researchers contrasted the representation of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs to identify any aspects of imbalance and bias in the portrayal of men and women in the selected proverbs. **Conclusion:** This study reveals similarities between English and Palestinian proverbs despite the many differences in both societies in terms of their cultures, languages, religions, history, family structures, social standards, and geographical locations. **Recommendations:** The researchers recommend that further research be conducted into how women and men are portrayed in proverbs from around the world to reinforce the findings reached in the present study. **Keywords:** Proverbs, Critical Discourse analysis (CDA), English culture, Palestinian culture, men, women.

## دراسة استكشافية لصفات الرجال والنساء الإيجابية التي تعرضها الأمثال الشعبية الإنجليزية والفلسطينية

يسرى شديد<sup>1,\*</sup>، وعزيز خليل<sup>2</sup>

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**المخلص:** تعتبر الأمثال مظهرًا لا غنى عنه للبعد الاجتماعي والثقافي للغة، إذ أنها تعكس الحكمة والتجارب والتقاليد وتتناقلها الأجيال عبر الزمن. **الهدف:** أجريت هذه الدراسة لبحث التمثيل الإيجابي للرجال والنساء في الأمثال الشعبية الإنجليزية والفلسطينية. **المنهج:** اعتمدت هذه الدراسة المنهج النوعي، وشملت عينتها الأمثال الإنجليزية والفلسطينية التي تذكر الرجل أو المرأة بصورة صريحة أو ضمنية، حيث جُمعت الأمثال من مصادر مختلفة بما في ذلك الكتب والمراجع والمصادر عبر الإنترنت. تم تصنيف الأمثال موضوعيًا مع التركيز على معانيها والسمات الشخصية الإيجابية التي تعكسها. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة نموذج فيركلاو (Fairclough) ثلاثي الأبعاد (1989) لتحليل الأمثال الإنجليزية والفلسطينية. وأخيرًا، أجرى الباحثان مقارنة بين تمثيل الرجال والنساء في الأمثال الإنجليزية والفلسطينية بهدف تحديد وجود أي مظاهر للاختلال أو الانحياز في تمثيل الرجل والمرأة في العينة المختارة. **النتائج:** أظهرت النتائج أن الأمثال باللغتين الإنجليزية والفلسطينية تنقل أحيانًا أفكارًا متناقضة، ومع ذلك فإن التناقضات ذاتها تنقل أيضًا رسائل فريدة في سياقات معينة. كما كشفت هذه الدراسة عن أوجه التشابه بين الأمثال الفلسطينية والإنجليزية على الرغم من الاختلافات الثقافية واللغوية والدينية والتاريخية، فضلًا عن التباينات في الهياكل الأسرية والمعايير الاجتماعية والمواقع الجغرافية. **التوصيات:** يوصى الباحثان بإجراء مزيد من الدراسات حول تمثيل النساء والرجال بمختلف اللغات والثقافات حول العالم، بهدف تعزيز النتائج التي توصلت إليها هذه الدراسة. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأمثال، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الثقافة الإنجليزية، الثقافة الفلسطينية، الرجال، النساء.

### Introduction

Language has its own structure, set of values, issues, and experiences. Proverbs are part of folk art that expresses folk wisdom briefly and figuratively. Moreover, proverbs reflect the history and worldview of the people as well as their customs, traditions, habits, and values. A proverb is described as a brief saying rich in implied meaning widespread and used by a community to express life experience, reality and wisdom (Miruka, 1994).

It is crucial to study proverbs and analyze them as indicators of various aspects of society, including cultural, social, economic and political dimensions, particularly because there is a clear alignment between proverbs and various cultural and social contexts (Qatanani, 2020). Proverbs serve a social function, including the transmission of wisdom and experience across generations. Proverbs are recognized according to their forms and functions as Kerschen (2012) mentioned that proverbs are the best markers of attitudes and beliefs to investigate the representation of women orally. Proverbs reflect what a society believes socially and culturally in various aspects including beliefs related to men and women.

1 Department of Linguistics and Translation, College of Humanities and Educational Sciences, Palestine Polytechnic University, Hebron, Palestine.

\* Corresponding author email: yusra.sh@ppu.edu

1 دائرة اللغويات والترجمة، كلية العلوم الإنسانية والتربوية، جامعة بوليتكنك فلسطين، الخليل، فلسطين.

\* الباحث المراسل: yusra.sh@ppu.edu

2 قسم اللغة الإنجليزية التطبيقية، كلية العلوم الإنسانية والتربوية، جامعة فلسطين الأهلية، بيت لحم، فلسطين

In general, proverbs are used for some practical purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication. According to Mieder (1993), "By employing proverbs in our speech we wish to strengthen our arguments, express generalizations, influence or manipulate other people, rationalize our own shortcomings, question certain behavioral patterns, satirize social ills, poke fun at ridiculous situations" (11). When used in different occasions, proverbs summarize a situation, give an opinion, or recommend an action. They offer consolation in both big and small difficulties and serve as a guidance when making decisions (Taylor, 1996).

People can better understand English and Palestinian cultures through learning proverbs that represent the values, beliefs, and experiences rooted in these cultures. Additionally, we might examine how both cultures characterize men and women, their roles, and any biases or differences in the representation of men and women in both cultures by comparing English and Palestinian proverbs. Many researchers have conducted studies that concluded the negative images associated with women including (Rani & Ranjha 2020, Rasul 2015, Sanauddin 2015, Shadeed & Khalil 2024). The findings of these studies tend to reveal familiar results that women are fragile, incapable, unintelligent, willful, talkative and a source of bad luck. The aforementioned scholars, among many others, have shown how women are represented in various societies. However, there is still a lack of relevant contrastive studies on the positive representation of man and women in English and Palestinian proverbs. Therefore, this study aims at filling a gap in the available literature.

## Literature Review

Hussein et al. (2024) conducted a study focusing on the notion of masculinity in Palestinian culture and the challenges Palestinian civilian men face while attempting to fulfill their traditional gender-based roles within the context of occupation. The fundamentals of Palestinian masculinity were recognized through an extensive analysis of a collection of popular proverbs in the Palestinian society. This study highlighted the way in which proverbs contribute to the sociocultural construction of ideas on manhood and promote patriarchal concepts and sexist ideologies, which are harmful to men, women, and consequently the family. The study highlighted the current situation of civilian men in the occupied Palestinian territories which represents the entrapment between the rigid traditions on one hand, and the oppressive practices of a military occupation on the other hand which has a negative impact on men and often results in violence and aggression.

Altohami (2023) compared proverbs in Egyptian Arabic and American English. He investigated the interaction between language, gender, and culture. Besides, he discussed the cultural differences, as well as the ideological representations of the term "wife" in them. Findings showed that, first, not all social roles connected with "wife" are represented in the American-English corpus due to cultural variations regarding the concept of the extended family. Second, the social actor "wife" receives a bad rap throughout the Egyptian-Arabic corpus. Third, both corpora shared some source domains in an effort to influence public perception of gender power relations. Negative depictions of the wife were further utilized to justify gender hegemony and the stigmatization, marginalization, and repression of women.

In his sociolinguistic research, Al-Zughul, (2020) sought to analyze how women are portrayed in Arabic and English. He used a qualitative research approach to explore how women are portrayed in both English and Arabic cultures. The proverbs from both cultures offer a wealth of insights into how gender affects life roles and demonstrate semantic discrimination against women. The majority of language directed towards women despised them and referred to them using the adjective "dumb." Many English proverbs justify violence against women. On the other hand, analyzing Arabic proverbs helps to clarify the position and status of women in Arab societies. In general, women are pigeonholed, vulnerable and their mentality, strength, and intellectual capacity are questioned. The findings demonstrated how male dominance leads to gender inequality and created a false image of female identity in both societies.

Hamamra (2020) conducted a socio-political study on the misogynist representation of women in Palestinian oral tradition. The study utilized interviews as its primary approach to engage into the critical feminist and sociolinguistics line in which modern Palestinian proverbs perpetuate a gender-discriminatory worldview that subjugates women to men's power. The study analyzed proverbs regarding women from the Palestinian culture alongside some modern Palestinian practices including: arranged marriage; objectifying women in the marriage market; the silencing of women's voices and honor killing. The study argued that the Israeli occupation upholds the creation and consumption of gender roles. Moreover, Feminist activists, NGO staff, and younger generations are perceived to promote immoral symbols of imperial and Western culture when it comes to their beliefs on gender equality.

Despite the fact that other research in the same field has revealed specific representations of women, contrastive research on the representation of both women and men in English and Arabic proverbs, especially Palestinian Arabic, has been scanty. Moreover, the researchers checked google and google scholar to ensure that no study had been conducted regarding the positive representation of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs. The majority of the studies conducted on proverbs as a component of folklore, according to this literature review, concentrated on the sociological, morphological, phonological, and semantic components of these proverbs. Even studies that examined gender in other languages tended to place a strong emphasis on women. Since Palestinian Arabic and English proverbs serve as a cultural reservoir, the current study intends to fill this research gap.

## Theoretical framework

The present contrastive study investigates the positive representation of men and women in selected English and Palestinian proverbs, seeking to explore the typical images portrayed for men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs. Many researchers have conducted research-contrasting languages, mainly focusing on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects of the languages. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, very scant research has dealt with proverbs in different languages, especially English and Arabic. The present research study seeks to fill a gap in this area of contrastive linguistics.

The present study falls within two sub-fields of applied linguistics, namely contrastive linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Contrastive linguistics can be referred to as the theoretically supported, systematic, and synchronic comparison of, typically, no more than two languages, and in certain cases, a smaller number of languages. Comparative studies were frequently conducted in the early stages of the field's growth with the goal of using the results to benefit the community, such as in translation or foreign-language education (Gast, 2012). Contrastive linguistic research has value to a wide range of applied- and theoretical-linguistic domains, including second-language

acquisition (SLA) research, translation studies and theory, lexicography, the study of cross-cultural communication, and even cultural studies.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a certain diversification in the field of contrastive linguistics insofar as new topics came into the focus of attention (e.g., pragmatics and discourse studies, House & Blum-Kulka 1986, Oleksy 1989), and new empirical methods were introduced, especially corpus-based ones. The availability of specialized corpora (parallel corpora and learner corpora) further led to a renewal of the link between contrastive linguistics and linguistic applications. The study of contrastive linguistics in the 1980s and 1990s included diverse and new topics such as pragmatics and discourse studies.

The second sub-field of applied linguistics relevant to the present study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). There are several definitions of what CDA claims to be and do. These definitions can range from the highly politicized: "to explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle" (Fairclough, 1989, 2) to the almost anodyne: "to answer questions about the relationships between language and society" (Rogers, 2005, 365). The two key components of critical discourse analysis, according to the majority opinion, are a more or less political concern with how ideology and power operate in society and a particular focus on how language affects, supports, and exposes these processes. Consequently, all of the definitions that place a focus on the connection between language (text, conversation), and power (dominance, inequality and political struggle).

CDA is a progressing multidisciplinary research movement based on various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of language. CDA studies generally view language as a type of social practice and are interested in carefully examining the hidden power relations and ideologies implicit in discourse. CDA research often seeks to study a topic or to solve a problem instead of beginning with fixed theoretical positions. Consequently, CDA research design and methodological processes can be somewhat flexible, iterative, and adaptive according to the specifics of a project (Kobayashi, 2020).

One popular technique used in critical discourse analysis is Norman Fairclough's analytical theory and model. He is one of the most recognized theorists in this essential field. Fairclough's theory of discourse analysis was influenced by many linguists including Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Louis Althusser in addition to Michael Halliday in the field of social sciences, as well as Pierre Bourdieu in the field of ideology (Capdevila, 2011).

According to Rodgers et al. (2005), the Fairclough's 3D analytic paradigm is classified into three levels of analysis: the text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Mirzaee and Hamidi (2012) claim that these three levels can be referred to as: (1) text, which can be written or spoken; (2) production and interpretation of the text, which is an example of discourse practice; and (3) text considered as a component of social practice. In the Fairclough 3D model, the second level of analysis emphasizes comprehension and examination of the description, interpretation, and consumption of a text, while the third level, or "sociocultural practice," tackles with issues of power (Rodgers et al., 2005, 372).

### Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the typical positive images portrayed for men and women in English proverbs?
2. What are the typical positive images portrayed for men and women in Palestinian proverbs?
3. What are the major differences and similarities between the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs?

### Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identifying the positive attributes of men and women reflected in English and Palestinian proverbs.
2. Contrasting the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs.

### Methodology of the Study

The current study employed a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand human's experiences and perspectives. Qualitative research examines the nature of phenomena, including their quality, various manifestations, the context in which they appear, or the viewpoints from which they can be perceived, but does not include information about their range, frequency, or location (Philipsen & Vernooij-Dassen, 2007). Typically, data used in qualitative research is not presented as numbers but rather as words (Punch, 2013).

### Data Collection

This study is based on a purposive sample selected from several sources including dictionaries, published books as well as research materials in online sources and libraries. Sampling in this study was appropriate since it seeks to examine a particular collection of proverbs related to the positive portrayal of men and women in both languages English and Arabic, especially that this study is not statistically representative but adopts a qualitative approach.

In the present study, the researchers collected a large corpus of English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs and surveyed them to locate those that make explicit or implicit positive mention of women and men. The corpus for this study was collected from several sources. The Arabic proverbs were collected from books: (موسوعة الأمثال الشعبية في الوطن العربي، ملامح الشخصية الفلسطينية، أمثالنا الشعبية في فلسطين – ألف مثل ومثل، المرأة في الأدب الشعبي الفلسطيني، الأمثال الشعبية الفلسطينية- قراءة معاصرة، ملامح المرأة في الأمثال الشعبية الفلسطينية، الدار دار أبونا- دراسات في التراث الشعبي الفلسطيني، موسوعة الأمثال الشعبية الفلسطينية)، and many internet sources.

These sources were purposively selected mainly because they included a large range of Arabic proverbs. The English proverbs, on the other hand, were collected from *The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* (1991), the *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (fifth edition), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (third edition), and multiple other internet sources.

A large corpus of both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs was built, and only proverbs that portray women and men positively were selected. The focus was on selecting a representative sample with implicit or explicit mention of men and women to reflect the research objectives. Proverbs with similar meanings and themes were excluded to avoid redundancy. Notably, it is worth mentioning that Palestinian Arabic proverbs comprised a corpus larger than English proverbs.

## Data Analysis

In this study, it was crucial to ensure that the representative sample is adequate to achieve the research objectives and to ensure the validity of the analysis. First, the content of all proverbs that explicitly or implicitly mention men or women was selected from English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs, whether positive or negative. The second step entailed the classification of proverbs into positive or negative followed by a thematic categorization that entailed the examination of a collection of proverbs to find recurring themes. The thematic classification focused on the meanings of these proverbs and the personal attributes they reflect, e.g., abilities (physical and mental), achievements, virtues, behaviors, emotions, social roles, marital relationships, role modeling, etc.

Arabic proverbs were translated into English and reviewed by a translation specialist to ensure accuracy and enable non-Arabic readers to understand their meanings. The next step entailed analyzing the proverbs using Fairclough's 3-dimensional model which consists of three stages: description, interpretation and explanation. Finally, the researchers contrasted the positive representation of men and women in English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs to identify any aspects of inequity, imbalance or bias in the portrayal of men and women in the selected proverbs. Multiple researchers participated in the analysis of proverbs to ensure reliability. Other scholars were engaged in reviewing the analysis, classification system and methodology in order to avoid bias in interpreting the findings of this research.

## Results and Discussion

The results are presented according to the three research questions.

### First Research Question

**What are the typical positive images portrayed for men and women by English proverbs?** All selected proverbs were thematically categorized focusing on their meaning and the positive personal attributes they reflect.

#### A. Categories of Women Proverbs:

1. Women as wise, a source of pride and joy
2. Women as positive homemakers, supportive, source of safety and foundation of the household
3. Women as responsible, determined and role models
4. Women as intelligent, cautious and well-mannered

**Table (1):** Proverbs portraying women as wise, a source of pride and joy.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
A cheerful wife is the joy of life	Having a happy wife means being happy	Praising the good wife as a source of happiness in her husband's life
A good wife and health are a man's best wealth	A man's treasure is good health and a loving wife	Cherishing having good health alongside a loving, caring and understanding wife

In this set of English proverbs, women have many positive portrayals. First, women are seen as a source of joy and happiness within their families primarily because a wife's positive emotional state contributes to stability and satisfaction in the relationship. Additionally, loving and caring women are described as (wealth) to their husbands, emphasizing that a man's true investment lies in his family as reflected in the second proverb.

**Table (2):** Proverbs portraying women as positive homemakers, supportive, source of safety and foundation of the household.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
The wife is the key of the house	A wife is responsible for managing household affairs	Encouraging young men to marry as a step towards establishing their lives
Men make houses, women make homes	Men build houses and women turn them into homes	Recognizing the essential yet complementary roles of men and women in marriage

In the above proverbs, phrases such as 'key of the house', 'women make homes' highlight the role of women as a source of safety, stability and guardians of household secrets especially because the key symbolizes security and protection. Moreover, women embody warmth, love, generosity and passion making the home a place of comfort and care.

**Table (3):** Proverbs portraying women as responsible, determined and role models.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Women in mischief are wiser than men	Women handle difficult situations better than men	Comparing both genders in dealing with difficult situations
Where the mistress is the master, the parsley grows faster	When the wife is in charge, she ensures that the parsley grows quickly and smoothly	Highlighting women's great ability to establish their homes and manage their responsibilities effectively

The first proverb expresses women's wisdom, portraying them as more responsible, intelligent and cunning than men, mainly in challenging and difficult situations. Therefore, women must take the lead and manage circumstances whenever unexpected or complicated issues arise. Responsible women and good housewives, are capable of making their homes flourish and grow by efficiently handling chores, raising children and managing their duties. In this context, the word 'parsley' symbolizes growth and progress.

**Table (4):** Proverbs portraying women as intelligent, cautious and well-mannered.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
A Woman has an eye more than a man	Women have better vision than men	Comparing both genders' ability to perceive situations and form their own opinions
If a woman were as little as she is good, a pease-cod would make her a gown and a hood	A woman's true beauty is defined by her manners and virtue, not by the simplicity or cost of her clothing	Praising virtuous women who uphold dignity and good manners, regardless of their external appearance

In this set of proverbs, women are described as intelligent, cautious and well-mannered. In the first proverb, for instance, the word 'eye' symbolizes women's ability to observe actions more wisely than men because women are better at assessing situations and paying attention to details.

It's crucial not to judge people on the basis of their external appearance, especially women, because what truly matters is their characters, manners and virtue. In the second proverb, the phrase 'a pease-cod' is used to refer to humble and inexpensive clothes that

are replaced by a 'gown and a hood' when a woman possesses dignity, respect and kindness demonstrating that it is the inner essence, not superficial appearance, that actually matters.

#### B. Categories of men Proverbs:

1. Men as honorable, strong and fair
2. Men as responsible and role models
3. Men as well-raised and well-mannered

**Table (5):** Proverbs portraying Men as honorable, strong and fair.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Giving honor unto the wife as the weaker vessel	Honorable men treat their wives well	Exploring the relationship between husbands and wives and the concept of marriage
He who treats you as himself does you no injustices	A man who treats you the way he wishes to be treated will never harm you	Encouraging people to treat others with the same respect and fairness they expect for themselves

Men have been described positively in the above proverbs. First, honorable men treat their wives with dignity, respect, mutual understanding and consideration. Compared to women, men are depicted as superior and stronger, as both are depicted as a 'vessel' to refer to their mutual need for love and care. Moreover, a fair man treats others as he wishes to be treated. This proverb encourages men to be fair, respectful and sympathetic. Such men do not harm or oppress others.

**Table (6):** Proverbs portraying Men as responsible and role models.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
A good husband makes a good wife	A husband who understands his responsibilities and fulfills them contributes to a stable and successful marriage	Highlighting the idea that mutual efforts, understanding and attitudes of the spouses strengthen their satisfaction with their marriage
Men get wealth and women keep it	Men bring money and women manage spending it	Reflecting the traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women

Men in the above proverbs are viewed as responsible figures and role models. A husband's duty is to support, respect and encourage his wife to create a stable and successful marriage. In the same context, a successful marriage depends on the spouses' realization of their roles to maintain a healthy marital relationship. As expressed in the second proverb, it is a man's responsibility to be the provider of the family. The complementary relationship between men and women urges both of them to fulfill their diverse roles properly, where men are supposed to be the primary earners or breadwinners. On the other hand, it is women's responsibility to preserve and handle the household finances.

**Table (7):** Proverbs portraying men as well raised and well-mannered.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
Nurture and good manners makes man	Men are raised to be men	Highlighting the influence of parents, friends, teachers and society in shaping a boy's personality
Men are what their mothers made them	Men are a reflection of their mothers	Emphasizing the mother's crucial role in raising her children especially the sons

In the above proverbs, men are perceived as well-mannered and properly raised. A man's character and attitude are shaped by various factors including education, values, care, family and friends. This suggests that men are not born men, but rather raised to be. The second proverb emphasizes the significant influence of a mother on her sons. A mother's guidance, love, nurturing and values have a profound influence on her son's character and identity. This may be attributed to the fact that fathers often spend most of their time working outside the house, while children interact mainly with their mothers.

#### Second Research Question

**What are the positive typical images portrayed for both men and women by Palestinian proverbs?** All selected proverbs were thematically categorized focusing on their meaning and the personal positive attributes reflected by them.

#### A. Categories of Women Proverbs:

1. Women as positive homemakers and source of happiness and blessings
2. Women as responsible, supportive and intelligent
3. Women as precious, well-raised and of good lineage
4. Women as fertile
5. Women as role models
6. Women as attractive and beautiful

**Table (8):** Proverbs portraying women as positive homemakers and source of happiness and blessings.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
إجرتها خضرا	Her leg is green	Convincing a man to marry a certain girl because she is blessed
أبو البنات مرزوق	A girls' father is blessed	Expressing joy and happiness in having daughters

The above proverbs describe women as a source of happiness and blessings as well as positive homemakers. For instance, the first proverb portrays women as a source of blessings. The proverb refers to the color green in describing a woman's leg as green is associated with nature, trees and forests. It is also associated with money, luck and health. Moreover, a father with daughters is considered blessed because daughters bring happiness, compassion and comfort to their fathers by enhancing emotional bonds and strengthening the family communication. On the other hand, a household without daughters lacks love, passion and kindness.

**Table (9):** Proverbs portraying women as responsible, supportive and intelligent.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
المرء عماره	Having a wife brings prosperity	Encouraging men to marry
الغزاة الشاطرة بتغزل على رجل حمارة	A skilled deer spins yarn on a donkey's leg	Praising wives who wisely utilize all their resources and potentials to achieve their goals

In the above proverbs, women are described as responsible, supportive and intelligent. For instance, having a wife leads to prosperity as expressed in the first proverb because wives are the pillar that helps in establishing their families and societies while ensuring their progress and success. Moreover, a good and beautiful wife must be able to adapt to any situation. The second proverb highlights that smart women utilize all their potentials, even in challenging circumstances. The 'deer' is used as a symbol of both intelligence and beauty of women.

**Table (10):** Proverbs portraying women as precious, well-raised and of good lineage.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
بنت الأصول أحسن من بنت القصور	A girl of good origins is better than a girl who lives in palaces	Advising men to choose their life partners wisely and logically
ما حدا بقدر يقيم صرامة من تحت أقدامها	No one can remove a gravel beneath her foot	Praising a good wife's morals

In the above proverbs, women are described as precious, well-raised and of good lineage. For instance, the first proverb offers advice to men when choosing a wife to look for the character, values and essence rather than material status and external appearance. Similarly, the second proverb highlights that well-raised and virtuous wives act wisely and thoughtfully, making them immune to harm from words or actions. The word 'gravel' symbolizes the slightest fault a woman may commit, emphasizing the importance of maintaining integrity and virtue.

**Table (11):** Proverbs portraying women as fertile.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
خير النساء الودودة الولودة	The best women are those who can give many children	Praising fertile women
حطت عجلها ومدت رجلها	She laid down after she gave birth to her calf	Describing a woman who has fulfilled her biological role of motherhood

The above proverbs primarily highlight women's fertility and reproductive role. The first proverb suggests that a good wife should recognize her biological responsibility and be capable of bearing many children. Traditionally and even today, Palestinian society places high emphasis on religious and cultural beliefs that encourage having many children, who are considered a blessing from God. The second proverb reflects the positive emotions of comfort, satisfaction and pride associated with the birth of a baby boy. In general, Arabic proverbs emphasize the value of having many children for several reasons. For instance, children are considered a source of pride, strength and continuity. Moreover, they are seen as a source of care and support for parents in their old age.

**Table (12):** Proverbs portraying women as role models.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
بنت الوجة عوامة	The daughter of a goose floats	Praising daughters who inherit their mothers' qualities
طب الجرة ع ثمها بتطلع البنت لإمها	(Like mother like daughter) Flip the jar on its mouth, the daughter will resemble her mother	Criticizing a girl for not embodying the characteristics of her mother

The above proverbs portray women as role models, mainly because mothers are responsible for nurturing and taking care of their children. The first example suggests that a good daughter inherits the qualities of her mother. On the other hand, some proverbs may reprimand daughters for not resembling their mothers. For instance, the second proverb in this category expresses the dissatisfaction of marrying a woman who lacks the qualities of her mom. The word 'jar' refers to a container made of glass or pottery that is mainly placed in the kitchen, which indicates that a woman's place is traditionally in her kitchen regardless of her qualities.

**Table (13):** Proverbs portraying women as attractive and beautiful.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
الطويلة طالت التينة والقصيرة ظلت حزينة	The tall girl managed to reach the fig tree, while the short and sad couldn't	Encouraging young men to marry girls with certain physical attributes
كانوا يدوروا ع الجدود وصاروا يدوروا ع الخدود	They used to look for grandparents, now for cheeks	Criticizing choosing a wife based on superficial features

In this set of proverbs, women are portrayed as attractive and beautiful. The first proverb suggests that physical beauty enables the girl to achieve her goals, unlike those who may be less fortunate. The 'fig tree' symbolizes women's goals and desires. In many cultures, including the Palestinian culture, physical appearance and beauty have traditionally been valued and admired. Women were expected to look beautiful and attractive to ensure marriage proposals or other privileges. However, great emphasis was also placed on the girl's origins. Apparently, men in the past used to look for the girl's background and her grandparents' reputation. However, their interest shifted to focus on her beauty as expressed in the second proverb.

#### B. Categories of men Proverbs:

1. Men as honorable and powerful
2. Males as precious and beloved
3. Men as responsible and supportive
4. Men as intelligent and role models

**Table (14):** Proverbs portraying men as honorable and powerful

Corpus	Description	Explanation
الراجل بعيوش اثني	Nothing shames a man	Reassuring a man who has committed a sin
اللي يحط فلوسه بنت السلطان ع كيسه	He who pays money can marry the king's daughter	Encouraging men to invest effort and money to marry a girl of good origins

Men in this category of proverbs are depicted as honorable and powerful. As seen in the first proverb, men are viewed impeccable, since nothing shames them even if they commit sins or cause troubles. Besides, as expressed in the second proverb, wealth and material possessions influence marriage decisions, particularly when marrying into a well-established family. This proverb suggests that financial factors often play a significant role in selecting marital partners, especially in cultures where social prestige and wealth are highly valued. This proverb indicates that powerful and wealthy men could have their desires fulfilled smoothly and easily.

**Table (15):** Proverbs portraying males as, precious and beloved.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
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لو كانوا ولادي مية أعز من عيني	My boys are more precious than my eyes even if I have a hundred sons	Expressing the immense value that parents place on their children
الولد الو فرحة لو كان قد القمح	A boy will bring happiness even if he is as small as a grain of wheat	Expressing the joy and happiness that the birth of a male baby brings to the family

This set of proverbs portrays a positive image of men as precious and beloved. The first proverb highlights the immense value of sons, suggesting that parents would choose to have them over their eyes. The second proverb conveys the joy, happiness and satisfaction that comes with the birth of a son.

**Table (16):** Proverbs of men as responsible and supportive.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
يا ما احلى البنات بوجود الابيات	Girls flourish in the presence of their fathers	Praising fathers who fulfill their roles properly
النسوان وداعة الاجاويد	Women are in the trust of good men	Complimenting a man who takes good care of his wife

In this category of proverbs, men are depicted as reliable, responsible and supportive. The first proverb highlights the major role fathers play in their daughters' lives, mainly because fathers are the source of support, joy, and growth. Men play significant roles as partners, fathers, brothers and mentors in women's lives as they provide emotional support, companionship, guidance, and protection. This notion is emphasized in the second proverb which suggests that honorable men with good manners treat their wives well because only bad men do otherwise.

**Table (17):** Proverbs portraying men as intelligent and role models.

Corpus	Description	Explanation
اللي ابوك عليه انت عليه	You and your father are two sides of the same coin	Praising a son for resembling his father
الديك الفصيح في البيضة بيصيح	The eloquent rooster crows in the egg	Praising men who are capable of fulfilling their roles even at a young age

This set of proverbs describes men as role models, courageous and intelligent. The first proverb suggests that fathers are role models to their sons in various aspects, including appearance, attitudes, actions and beliefs etc. Additionally, men are portrayed as eloquent and intelligent. The second proverb expresses the joy and pride of a boy who is capable of fulfilling his role and duties at a young age.

### Third Research Question:

#### What are the major differences and similarities between the portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs?

The portrayal of men and women in both English and Palestinian proverbs varies in several aspects. In English proverbs, women are depicted in multiple roles, including wives, mothers and daughters. Some proverbs portray women positively, highlighting their wisdom, determination, responsibility, support, intelligence, values, as well as their role as a source of pride, joy and safety. Whereas men are depicted as husbands, boys and sons, they are also likened to lions symbolizing honor, strength, responsibility, good manners and leadership as role models.

In Palestinian proverbs, women are portrayed in various roles ,including wives, mothers, daughters and aunts. Some proverbs depict women positively for being responsible, supportive, intelligent, fertile, role models, attractive, positive homemakers and a source of blessings. Similarly, men are represented in many roles, such as fathers, husbands, sons and uncles. Men, often compared to

house pillars are also likened to lions and roosters, symbolizing strength, eloquence and leadership. Some proverbs portray men positively, highlighting their features as honorable, powerful, precious, responsible, well-raised, courageous, intelligent and role models. The representation of men and women in these proverbs reflects cultural norms and expectations.

The positive representation of men may be influenced by various factors such as their roles as providers and protectors. Many societies value men's ability to provide and protect as a reflection of their strength, bravery, and responsibility for others. Besides, proverbs have often been created and transmitted across generations, shaped by the historical context of their time. In earlier eras, when gender roles were more rigidly defined, positive portrayals of men might have been more prevalent. The portrayal of men and women in English and Palestinian proverbs can vary significantly due to the cultural, historical, and social contexts of each language. While it is challenging to generalize, some major differences in the portrayal of men and women in these proverbs can be observed:

#### A. Traditional Gender Roles:

Traditional gender roles are commonly represented in both English and Palestinian proverbs. In English proverbs, women are depicted as nurturers, homemakers, and caregivers who provide guidance, support, and stability. In addition, women are responsible for preserving and handling the family's finances while taking care of the children. Meanwhile, males are portrayed as strong, powerful individuals who, in turn, love, respect, and defend their wives while fulfilling their role as the family's primary breadwinners.

Similarly, in Palestinian proverbs, women are shown as the foundation of the house, managing responsibilities, raising children and maintaining the home. For instance, Palestinian women have traditionally created intricate clothing and embroidery reflecting their creativity, innovation and resourcefulness. On the other hand, men are depicted as protectors and providers who must also treat their wives with dignity, respect and consideration.

#### B. Beauty and Appearance:

Both English and Palestinian proverbs often emphasize women's beauty and physical appearance, reinforcing social norms on the significance of physical attractiveness of women. For example, women's physical attractiveness is the most important factor in English proverbs. Thus, in order to please her husband, a woman must maintain her beauty and appearance. Women are also likened to fruit such as 'cherry', 'grapes' symbolizing their attractive nature.

On the other hand, Palestinian proverbs highlight the value of women's attractiveness and beauty, portraying it as a key factor in achieving their dreams and ambitions. Moreover, selecting a wife is often based primarily on her physical beauty or good origins. These proverbs mention specific physical attributes such as skin color, height, facial beauty and other physical traits. Besides, some proverbs encourage men to seek a second marriage once their wives lost their youth and beauty.

Nevertheless, both English and Palestinian proverbs place little emphasis on men's physical appearance because a man's value is not determined by superficial traits such as skin tone, height, or handsomeness; but rather, by his manners, accomplishments, and character.

### C. Wisdom and Intelligence:

While both English and Palestinian Arabic cultures have proverbs that highlight the wisdom and intelligence of both men and women, the emphasis on these qualities may differ. English proverbs often portray women as more intelligent than men, particularly in challenging or difficult situations. Moreover, women are depicted as having the ability to observe actions wisely particularly in noticing details. On the other hand, some English proverbs suggest that women prioritize their beauty over intellectual development. Interestingly, men in English proverbs are not explicitly featured with intelligence or wisdom. In fact, these qualities are linked to upbringing, as a child raised by his father and other men is believed to mature and develop wisdom at a young age.

On the other hand, Palestinian proverbs emphasize women's intelligence and wisdom, particularly in their ability to adapt to difficult situations. Palestinian folk culture suggests that women use their intelligence and cunningness naturally to claim their rights. Men, in contrast, are featured with eloquence and intelligence especially when they demonstrate responsibility and fulfill their duties at a young age. Additionally, older men are often associated with experience and wisdom.

Despite the differences observed in the analysis of English and Palestinian proverbs, both cultures share similarities in their perceptions of men and women. The following statements highlight the similarities between English and Palestinian proverbs in depicting women and referring to their positive traits.

1) Both English and Palestinian proverbs value women as a source of pride, joy and blessings, emphasizing that a strong and harmonious partnership with a good wife is the true foundation of happiness and prosperity.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"A good wife and health is a man's best wealth."	"A Girls' father is blessed." "أبو البنات مرزوق"

2) Both English and Palestinian proverbs cherish women's traits such as being supportive, responsible and determined while emphasizing the significant influence a wife has on the family's well-being and success in creating a nurturing and harmonious environment at home.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"The wife is the key of the house."	"Our house is established by a thread given by each of us." "مني خيط ومنك خيط يا زلمة بعمر البيت"

3) Both English and Palestinian proverbs encourage prioritizing qualities such as integrity, kindness, and virtue when choosing a life partner.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"If a woman were as little as she is good, a pease-cod would make her a gown and a hood."	"A girl of good origins is better than a rich girl" "بنت الأصول أحسن من بنت القصور"

On the other hand, both English and Palestinian proverbs share similarities in describing men and highlighting their positive traits. The following are examples.

1) Both English and Palestinian proverbs cherish men for being honorable, powerful and responsible.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"Men, not walls, make a city safe."	"Only men are capable of this" "ما إلها إلا رجالها"

2) Both English and Palestinian proverbs refer to men as role models and well-mannered.

Example (English)	Example (Palestinian Arabic)
"A man among children will long be a child; a child among men will soon be a man."	"You and your father are two sides of the same coin" "اللي أبوك عليه انت عليه"

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The English and Palestinian Arabic cultures recognize distinct societal roles for women, as demonstrated by the two corpora. In both English and Palestinian proverbs, women are more frequently referenced than men, suggesting that women have been a topic of fascination and interest for generations. This could be due to a variety of factors, such as cultural norms and expectations. Proverbs often highlight the significance of women's roles and mirror societal standards and expectations. Furthermore, many proverbs emphasize themes related to marriage, family, and relationships, where women play a crucial role. Additionally, in some societies, women may have faced historical challenges or barriers, which has led to a greater emphasis on their experiences and roles in proverbs.

In both cultures, women are considered a source of joy, happiness and pride as they strengthen the family bonds and provide kindness, affection, support and serve as a good role model. Furthermore, both English and Palestinian cultures encourage men to seek well-raised women who are featured with dignity, respect and virtue. Palestinian proverbs in particular emphasize the significance of women's lineage due to the cultural emphasis on family honor and social reputation. As a result, well-raised women are regarded as precious, and men are expected to invest effort and money to marry them. In contrast, English proverbs place less emphasis on women's lineage compared to Palestinian proverbs.

English proverbs highlight women's wisdom, particularly in difficult situations. Moreover, proverbs emphasize women's ability to pay attention to details. As a result, English proverbs emphasize the importance of women's intelligence in their husbands' lives. On the other hand, Palestinian proverbs depict women as intelligent and wise, especially in their ability to adapt in difficult situations. Folk culture in the Palestinian society affirms that women use their intelligence and cunningness as part of their nature. However, some Palestinian proverbs reflect injustice faced by girls who were prevented from pursuing education and achieving self-actualization.

Both English and Palestinian Arabic proverbs cherish men for being honorable and well-mannered for treating others and particularly their wives with dignity, respect and mutual understanding. Additionally, men are portrayed as responsible and powerful figures in both cultures. They are also considered good role models. Palestinian proverbs further highlight the fact that boys may resemble their uncles mainly because extended families are common in the Palestinian society, where children frequently observe the actions of their relatives and interact with them.

The investigation of proverbs in English and Palestinian cultures reveals that both societies emphasize men's role as protectors and providers, offering protection and financial stability to their families. Moreover, both English and Palestinian proverbs suggest that gender differences are deeply ingrained, as men continue to take advantage of their power, influence and privilege.

Proverbs reveal valuable insights into people's inner lives and perspectives on society, since proverbs are rich with cultural values. While proverbs are less widespread in English society, they are nonetheless prevalent in the Palestinian culture. Additionally, this study has demonstrated that English and Palestinian proverbs, despite their utterly dissimilar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, can convey similar or contrasting ideas in comparable situations.

Proverbs in both English and Palestinian Arabic sometimes convey contradictory messages, yet the contradictions themselves hold unique meanings within specific contexts. Ultimately, this study reveals similarities between English and Palestinian proverbs despite the many differences between the two societies in terms of their cultures, language, religion, history, family structures, social standards, and geographical locations.

## Recommendations

Further investigation into the portrayal of men and women in proverbs from other cultures may be implemented upon the findings of this study. This research sparks interest in assessing how well we comprehend Palestinian culture, particularly regarding gender differences within society. Another interesting area of study is the role of proverbs in language learning. The educational and societal values that proverbs in English and Palestinian cultures convey could be the subject of future study. Further investigation into these proverbs could validate and expand upon the conclusions drawn in the current study.

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- **Ethical approval and consent to participate:** The commonly accepted laws have been applied.
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- **Author contribution:** The first researcher, Yusra Shadeed, conducted this study as an excerpt from her Master's thesis and was responsible for corresponding with the journal. The second researcher, Prof. Aziz Khalil, supervised the thesis.
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