

Traditional Female Initiation (TFI) as Ideology and Power in the Language System of the Samburu in Kenya: Rethinking the Fight against FGM

Evelyn Mahero
Laikipia University, Kenya

Abstract

This study investigated Traditional Female Initiation (TFI) as a cultural practice that is deeply grounded in the Samburu tradition and way of life. The study is based on the fact that a lot of campaigns have been done to stop FGM but the practice still goes on. The TFI practice and the Samburu language are inseparable because TFI practice is entrenched in discourse that is deeply rooted in the Samburu culture. TFI is not only a problem in Kenya but also in other East African countries neighbouring Kenya, the rest of Africa, Asia Middle East, Europe and North America. This study examines ideology and power relations portrayed in TFI discourse and how this has been a factor in the perpetuation of TFI. The study is based on two hypotheses: That there is power relation portrayed in the discourse of TFI; and secondly, that this power relation has played a role in the perpetuation of TFI. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Ruth Wodak was used as the theoretical framework. The study was conducted in Samburu County at Suguta in Mar Mar Location. The researcher attended a TFI ceremony to collect data. The target population consisted of the Samburu native speakers attending the TFI ceremony. The sample was collected purposively to include speakers in the ceremony. Two subjects were purposively selected for in depth interview. The data was collected by recording, observation, note taking and in depth interview. The data was later transcribed, translated, categorized and analyzed in the light the tenets of CDA.

Keywords: Female genital mutilation, ideology, power, traditional female initiation (TFI).

Introduction

Samburu people belong to a marginalized community in Kenya found in Samburu County in the Rift Valley region. The TFI practice among the Samburu is an ideology and a way of life that is deeply rooted in Samburu culture and it is a complex system of communication and identity. Traditional Female Initiation (TFI) is a cultural identity practice, which entails the removal of part or all of the female external genitalia. The practice has been reported to often result in physical, sexual and mental consequences (WHO, 2008). The international community has been paying increased attention to TFI, citing the practice as a threat to women's health and a human rights violation. The practice, also known as Female Circumcision (FC) and Female Genital Cutting (FGC), is steeped in tradition and culture accompanied by special discourse in many countries in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America. Culture is learnt and children learn culture from adults. This is why FGM is spreading from one generation to another in various communities (Denniston, Hodge & Milos, 2000: 8). The current study is however limited to the TFI discourse among the Samburu of Samburu County in Northern Kenya.

Research on Women and Gender Based Violence (United Nations Human Rights Report, 2006) also reports that there are an estimated 135 million girls and women who have undergone the procedure with an additional two million a year at risk of being subjected to the same; this means approximately six thousand per day, globally. United Nations Human Rights report published in the year (2000) has shown that efforts to end the practice focus on legal initiative, improving the status of women socially and economically to enhance their ability to make choices. The report observes that the practice has been banned in twenty eight (28) African countries where it is practised, including Kenya. These concerns motivate this study especially considering the question of why the girls and women still accept to undergo

this painful and prohibited procedure. This research sought to establish whether the discourse used in this systematic practice of traditional female initiation plays a role in sustaining and perpetuating the practice among the Samburu women and girls.

Different tactics, including deliberate empowerment of women socially and economically as well as the legal approach, have been adopted to counter and understand TFI. The linguistic view has not been employed in understanding TFI practice. In this community, the practice is rampant and easily accepted by women and girls as a way of life that marks transition from childhood to adulthood. According to Cameron (2001: 24), the main claim of CDA (the linguistic view adopted in this study) is that the way certain realities get talked about or written about, especially the choices speakers and writers make are not just random but ideologically patterned. These choices do much especially in relation to naturalization of particular social arrangements which serve certain specific interests so that with time, they may come to seem like the only possible or rational arrangement.

The other approach that has been used to counter TFI is the use of promising practices meant to replace it (Feldman-Jacobs & Ryniak, 2006: 6). These practices include; education, local capacity building, community awareness, advocacy at national government level among others. However, this study sought to expose and analyse the discourse that underlies the sustainability of this practice. Language may be used to exercise power and this is seen in unequal relationships that exist among people because one party is able to exercise considerable or absolute control over both what is said and how it is said. In this case, therefore, if these relationships are observed carefully, language may enable us understand issues of social concern (Fairclough, 1989: 112).

The Kenya demographic and Health survey Report (KDHS 1998), revealed that approximately 32 percent of Kenyan women had undergone female genital mutilation. In Kenya, the practice of female mutilation is considered dangerous and the country has imposed laws to prevent the practice from continuation. In 2001, Kenya outlawed female genital mutilation among girls under the age of 18 years old in the Children's Act (Children's Act, 2001). This law stipulates, in section 18 that 'Any conviction for FGM related offences carries a penalty of 12 months imprisonment or a fine of KSH 50, 000 or both'. The same year, the ministry of health supported the punishment and circulated the policy directive making FGM illegal in all health facilities. In 2003, the country signed the Maputo protocol, which in article 5 stipulates that FGM should be prohibited and condemned (Ministry of Health, 1999).

It has been reported that power is controlled and managed through discourse. TFI among the Samburu has been addressed in many ways except by looking at the discourse used in TFI. This study aims at establishing the fact that TFI is an ideology connected to language and not just a cultural identity practice. This will be achieved in this paper by first, establishing the portrayal of women and power relations in TFI discourse during the Samburu TFI ceremony; and secondly, by explaining how power relations play a role in the perpetuation of TFI among the Samburu.

Reasons for TFI in Various Communities in Africa

TFI is a cultural identity practice that is carried out by the Samburu to provide transition from childhood to adulthood for women. Yoder and Khan (2007) report that mothers chose to subject their daughters to the practice to protect them from being ostracized, beaten, shunned, or disgraced. Social pressure is also one of the factors among many communities in which most girls and women are circumcised; through this, family and friends have created an environment in which the practice of mutilation becomes a requirement for social acceptance among the peer groups to avoid name calling for one to fit in the group (Boyle, 2002:18). The

Maasai of Tanzania refuse to call a woman 'mother' if she has children and has not been circumcised (Boyle 2002: 36).

Similarly, Barth (1981: 14) argues that human behaviour is shaped by consciousness and purpose. It is explained by the utility of its consequences in terms of values held by the actor and the awareness on the part of the actor of the connection between an act and its specific results. The perception of other people in the community shapes one's behaviour and way of life. Packer (2005: 224) has the same opinion and argues that attitudes are determined by beliefs about the consequences of a particular behaviour. Normative considerations consist of social pressure to perform or not to perform a particular behaviour. The norms on which these considerations are based are communicated by important 'others' through socialization and social interaction and the individual's motivation or desire to comply with these. In order to be accepted in the society, the Samburu girl and woman is under pressure to undergo TFI. Utz-Billing and Kentenich (2008: 6) note that FGM is a very delicate topic that is deeply rooted in the tradition and culture of a society.

According to Barber (2010: 16), common reasons for the carrying out of FGM include the belief that the clitoris is unclean and could poison infants during birth; that female genitalia are unclean or 'masculine'; that infibulated women are more beautiful, have a tight vagina that increases sexual pleasure for the man, and a long labia that increases sexual pleasure for both partners; that women are unmarriageable without circumcision; and that the procedure protects female chastity and marital fidelity and thus family honour.

Momoh (2005:9-10) says that in societies that practise female genital mutilation, a number of cultural elements are present; these include particular beliefs, behavioural norms, custom rituals, and social hierarchies, religious, political and economic systems. Female genital mutilation has been supported by centuries of tradition, culture and false beliefs and it is perpetuated by poverty, illiteracy as well as the low status of women in societies. Among the Samburu, TFI is a strict cultural activity that must be done, levels of illiteracy are high and in this research, it was observed that women have less power and low status in the community.

Discourse Power and Ideology

The issue of power has been discussed by various scholars in Critical Discourse Studies. According to Cameron (2001: 51), reality including power and gender relations is constructed in and through discourse. CDA looks for the ideological significance of the choices that speakers and writers make, the role they play, and the position they occupy to determine power relations. Cameron (2001: 52) observes that if one is interested in the questions of power in discourse, it is always worth asking in relation to the existing data the question; who is allowed or obliged to say what, when?

Power involves control by one group over the others or the other. Such control may pertain to action or cognition. This means that a powerful group may not only limit the freedom of action of others but also influence their minds. Besides using force and direct control, the most effective power is mostly cognitive and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation and manipulation (van Dijk, 1993: 271). However, such power relation is not always bluntly manipulative but enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite legitimate and therefore CDA also focuses on the discursive strategies that legitimize, control or otherwise naturalize the social order, and especially relations of inequality. The social order of TFI has been naturalized and transformed into ideology, no one among the Samburu seems to notice the imbalance. Naturalization obscures the fact that the way things are, is not inevitable or unchallengeable (Cameron, 2001: 23). In this study, this issue of power relation is also discussed in the light of the tenets of Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which is the main CDA approach used

in the study. Following Reisigl and Wodak (2001), the questions and statements below guide the discussion in this section:

- a) How are persons and things named and referred to linguistically?
- b) What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
- c) By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?
- d) From what perspective or point of view are these naming, attributions and arguments expressed?
- e) Are the respective discriminatory utterances articulated overtly, or are they intensified, or are they mitigated

Corresponding with the above questions, Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 8) identify five kinds of discursive strategies that are involved in positive Self and negative Other representation thus:

- i) **Referential strategies:** they represent social actors, in-groups, out-groups, reference tropes, biological, naturalizing, depersonalizing, metaphors, metonymies as well as synecdoche
- ii) **Predicational strategies:** For example, the stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicate.
- iii) **Argumentation strategies:** they occur where we have the topic through which positive and negative attributions are justified.
- iv) **Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation:** these are the means with which speakers express their involvement in discourse and position their point of view in the reporting, description, narration or quotation of discriminating events or utterances
- v) **Intensifying strategies on one hand and mitigation strategies:** Both of them help to qualify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, gender, anti-semitic nationalist or ethnicist utterances. These questions and strategies lead this discussion on the relations discussed in the findings of this study.

Discourse Historical Approach

Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA), an approach of CDA proposed by Wodak (2001) has been preferred in this research because of three reasons. Firstly, it does not focus on specific linguistic items only, but also provides a vehicle for looking at latent power dynamics and the range of potential agents. Secondly, it integrates and triangulates knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the political and social fields in which discursive practices are woven. This suits the current study which is investigating TFI as a practice that is historically rooted in political, social and cultural system of the Samburu people. Thirdly, DHA as a branch of CDA accounts for the fact that the researcher in this study did not use the existing discourse but went to the field to collect data. The data of the current study entails what was collected during field work mentioned above including referential and predication strategies, argumentation, perspectivation, intensification and mitigation strategies.

The aim of this methodology is to be deductive and pragmatic because the categories of analysis are first developed in line with the research interests and a constant movement back and forth between theories and the data is suggested (Wodak, 2007: 87, Wodak 2001: 58). According to KhosraviNik (2010:64), naming of actors may be by functionalization (by the functions they do), aggregation (if the actors are referred to as collective entity), along with the positioning of us/them categorization through the use of pronouns, status, position

among others that may be in the provisions of a given discourse. These are among important aspects to consider in the process of perspectivization. This was of relevance to the current study because the study had categories of actors who are initiated and those who are not in terms of women and there are also the men who participated in the ceremony.

Methodology

The data was collected in Samburu County, Suguta of Mar Mar Division. The target population in this study consisted of the native speakers of Samburu language in Samburu County. Having been interested in female initiation discourse, the researcher had to look for a community such as this, which has an elaborate female initiation culture. The sample for the study consisted of Samburu native speakers in the TFI ceremony where the researcher collected data. The researcher got two members from the ceremony by judgmental sampling; one male and one female aged 65 and above years for in depth interview. Male and female were considered because they perform different roles in TFI ceremony and so the researcher expected to get different views of TFI from both sexes. The age of 65 and above years was chosen to get the most accurate, original, uncorrupted information about TFI among the Samburu. No subject was coerced to participate in the research. All participants gave informed consent and the researcher assured them that their privacy would be protected since they did not want to be exposed.

A tape recorder was used to collect the articulated discourse for transcription, translation, and analysis. An interview schedule was also used to collect data from the judgmentally sampled respondents. During this time, the researcher used a native interpreter as a research assistant to collect data using the interview schedule. The researcher did observation and recorded the information in a note book for analysis. The data collected was thereafter transcribed then translated into English with the aid of two chosen fluent native speakers. The data was later analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis theory and conclusions and recommendations were made.

Power Relations in TFI Discourse and Practice

Various practices in the TFI discourse and ceremony portray power imbalance between men and women and also between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. These practices which are discussed in these next sections include: the representation of the uncircumcised other as out group, the circumcised us as in group and finally the role men and women play in the TFI ceremony.

Naming at the Micro-level and how it relates to the Social Macro-structures

The girls who are circumcised are viewed positively as belonging to the society and given prestigious names (micro level) and this affects how they are esteemed in the society (macro structures). Those who are not initiated are despised and viewed negatively.

According to KhosraviNik (2010: 56-65), micro-level of analysis includes the linguistic mechanisms such as referential strategies or names through which social ideologies which are macro-structures are realised. The fact that women are portrayed in negative or positive images is historical among the Samburu because the subjects that were interviewed could not tell when it began except by their ancestors. Mbiu (2012) attributes this kind of trend to the patriarchal system in many Kenyan societies noting that it has preserved discrimination through linguistic terms over the years (Mbiu 2012:48). Among the Samburu, women are depicted using positive or negativereferences depending on whether they are initiated or not, married or unmarried, barren or fertile.

Representation of uncircumcised Other as out-group

A woman who is not initiated among the Samburu is given names which imply stubbornness, curses, uncleanness, disobedience, a good for nothing person who cannot be married by any man, among others. This study found out that they are even given the names of the dead. This means that such a woman who is not initiated is as good as dead. These references are extremely discriminative and demeaning. Such women find themselves excluded from many societal endeavours; they have no say in any matter in the community. There are several references as discussed below:

A The hyperbole of the dead girl – *Ndorrop-sesen*

Ndorrop-sesen is an exaggerated name given to a girl who completely refuses to be initiated. This image when given to a girl brings absolute loss of face to the girl and the family of the girl. It is a taboo name given to a girl who dies before marriage without having borne a child, whether circumcised or not. A girl who refuses circumcision completely is therefore regarded to be as good as dead. The stigmatization caused by this name is too much to bear according to the subjects who reported that it is the worst name that can be used to refer to a woman.

One of the subjects reported that ‘They eventually die because we believe they are dead unless initiated’. The subject also said that such a girl should not appear in cultural ceremonies and functions otherwise the event will be contaminated. This means that the micro-linguistic reference brings about macro social consequences to the girl making the girl isolated; she cannot mix freely with other people. She therefore misses out on all the cultural rights and privileges of a woman in her society. Such a woman who bears this name has no power to marry, start a family or even own wealth in her community for such power is only bestowed upon those who are initiated.

B The metaphor of dirt – *Nkuumei*

Nkuumei is an image of dirt used to refer to the Turkana. Due to cattle rustling conflicts, the Samburu and the Turkana have a lot of enmity with each other. This is one of the abusive names the Samburu use to refer to the Turkana who are considered unclean because they do not carry out initiation of either girls or boys. The Samburu believe that one gets cleansed after initiation. An uninitiated girl is called this name in comparison with the despised Turkana people to show that the girl is not clean. The use of this term therefore excludes and discriminates a girl who is not initiated thus limiting her power and social interaction in the community.

The reference *Nkuumie* also makes the girl feel that she does not belong to her community, that she is more of a Turkana than a Samburu. This reference also implies that such a girl is an enemy of the Samburu since the Turkana, who are called by this image of dirt, are enemies of the Samburu. The Samburu discourage their sons from marrying the Turkana girls since they are not initiated, hence they are unclean. This implies that no man will want to marry a girl who bears this metaphorical image. United Nations Human Rights Report (2006:10) also reports that in communities where TFI is practised, it is believed that the operation makes a woman clean, proper and fit for marriage

C *Mirrtatoi*

Mirrtatoi is another reference for an uncircumcised girl. It means stubborn. A Samburu girl is expected to be circumcised at the appropriate age willingly. However if she refuses, she is forced by the community and family members. If this collective force does not still work and the girl affords to escape, she is referred to as *Mirrtatoi* because she is considered stubborn. This micro linguistic term leads to macro ideological consequences that isolate the girl and

make her not to enjoy any privileges of women in the society including, marriage and attending ceremonies.

Representation of the Circumcised 'Us' as 'In-group'

The women who undergo initiation are given names that empower them in the society according to Samburu culture. They are given names that suggest obedience, respect, cleanliness, blessings, maturity, responsibility and leadership. The dominance of a woman is pegged on initiation. Data collected indicate that when a girl is initiated, she gets the power to become a woman, to get married, to bear children and own wealth. Among the Samburu, this is marked by a new name such as *ntomononi* (initiated respectful married young woman), *Nakitok* (initiated respectful married old woman) and others as reported by Mahero and Ndoró (2016). These acceptable references are given to circumcised women as an honour and appreciation for obeying the cultural expectation of initiation. These circumcised women enjoy all privileges of community including marriage ownership of property, participation in community events and even leading other women.

The Role Men and Women Play in TFI ceremony as a Source Power Imbalance

During the collection of data, the researcher observed that men and women play different roles in the ceremony. They also use language differently in the initiation process. Women begin preparations for the ceremony early in the day by collecting firewood, washing utensils, fetching water among other household chores. However, the ceremony begins officially when the men arrive in the evening. This ceremony cannot be started by the women as the culture does not allow them; it is a taboo. Men play the powerful roles like praying to invoke God for blessings while women play the subordinate roles of singing and making the ceremony lively and carrying out the household chores. Discourse has been regarded by many scholars as an important site for both constructing and maintaining power relations. CDA views power as already belonging to some participants and not to others and as a condition which is determined by their conditional role and or socio-economic status, ethnic identity, or gender (Juez, 2009: 240).

After they open the ceremony, the men control the whole ceremony, for instance, there is no prayer in the ceremony that is said by a woman because they are considered unfit to approach God. The women only respond to the prayers made by the elders in an agreeable manner. Social power is defined in terms of control. Therefore, the members of a given social group will have power if they are able to control the acts and minds of members of other groups (van Dijk, 2001). The ability to control other people's minds and acts presupposes a privileged access to certain social resources such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, and information which are not easily available to all human beings (Juez, 2009). The Samburu women in this ceremony have no direct access to prayers except through men who pray on their behalf. The data below is an example of the data where God is mentioned up to thirteen times yet it is one of the short prayers that was made by a father for the initiate daughter. The fact that no woman makes any prayer in the ceremony borders on power imbalance and discrimination.

A Father's prayer for the girl on the eve of initiation

Nkomono e menye ntito (fathers prayer in the evening)

3a) Father: *Nkai tamayiana ana titaai..... naaishoo:, nkanyit airukurukore, nkoito ee ltung'ana lang'.*

3b) *Te nkiama*

All: *Nkai ??*

3c) Father: *Too nkerra,*

All: *Nkai??*

3d) Father: *Too nkineji,*

All: *Nkai??*

3e) *Too nkishu*

All: *Nkai??*

3f) Father: *Too: nkera,*

All: *Nkai*

3g) Father: *Te biotisho e sesen,*

All: *Nkai??*

3h) Father: *Tee mali pooki*

All: *Nkai??*

Translation of Transcript

3a) Father: God bless this my daughter who has respected me and followed the ways of our people,

All: God??

3b) Father: In marriage

All: God??

3c) Father: With children

All: God??

3d) Father: With goats

All: God??

3e) Father: With sheep

All: God??

3f) Father: With cows

All: God??

3g) Father: With good health

All: God??

3h) Father: With all wealth

All: God??

It is also noticeable that at each point, the father speaks without the mention of their God; the God is actually covert in the statement. For instance, line 3h, here is *with all wealth* but what is actually meant is *God bless her with all wealth*. So if this was to be considered, then it would mean that the mention of God here is up to twenty times. The prayer implies that those who do not accept to be initiated will miss all the goodies mentioned by the father in prayer. This is indirect way of ensuring that the other girls in the ceremony who are hoping to enjoy these blessings undergo TFI. This role of blessing the girl during initiation must be done by a man. The man has the power to bless and curse a woman but the woman has no such power.

Only one speech was made by an elderly woman. When giving the speech the elderly woman speaks directly to the girl. This is because women are not supposed to address men among the Samburu; and secondly, the elderly woman's speech is to advise the initiate on various issues. She tells her the significance of initiation encouraging her to leave childhood friends and join women. The woman also tells the girl to respect her husband when she gets married but in this speech, no indication is made to show that the man will respect the girl. This means that even though a woman is given the opportunity to speak, she still serves the interests of the man. The initiate is even made to know that her husband has 'bought' her with a lot of wealth and she should be submissive to him. This brings out a woman as an object that can be bought by a man.

This implies that a woman is limited in choices, opinion and power just like a commodity that is bought and sold. At the end of the speech the girl is to abide without question. According to van Dijk (2001), the power of the dominant groups is sometimes accepted and integrated in laws, rules and habits in such a way that sometimes the power can be taken for granted and the dominated groups may comply or legitimize such power and even find it natural and legitimize the relation of inequality that is not in the best interest of the powerless.

When a morning prayer is made for the father by an elder, tobacco that is an expensive ceremonial commodity is shared out but no woman is given. This is justified by the fact that no woman should take tobacco in public. As the ceremony unfolds, the father rather than the mother is seen to be taking centre stage. There is a special prayer for the father but the mother is not mentioned. Similarly, when butter is applied on the head of the father to mark blessings, none is applied on the mother. According to Cameron (2001: 52), power is related to who is allowed to say what and when.

An example of dominance by the male over the female is also seen in the data below where a conversation with a girl initiate is recorded.

B *Lpayian KitokOirorie Ntito Atuwaa Menye (An Age mate of the Father engages the girl in a conversation in the evening of the circumcision day)*

Father: *Nakyarai kiting'idakinete ntokiti poo:ki,..naayaka yioo lpayian lino,.. naa kiyieu niki mparr iyie lkuti omon. Tobolo ltau lino nimisap yioo.*

Father: Our daughter, we have really enjoyed everything, that your husband has brought to us, and we want to ask you some questions. Please be sincere in answering them.

Father: *Itonyorrayie dei ale payian metaa lino ntarasi...?*

Daughter: *(ee paa:pa....)*

Father: Have you accepted this man to be your husband forever...?

Daughter: (yes father)

Father: *incho dei yoo matalak poo:ki toki nikitama anaparr, tana incho yioo matam nkulie kumo?*

Daughter: *(ee paapa)*

Father: Will you make us pay back all that we have enjoyed today or you will make us pay when you run away or will let us enjoy more?

Father: (yes father)

Father: *inya dei lkumbou, tilimu ndedei amu keitorrno tinikitumi inyeita nitejo apa minya?*

Father: Do you sniff tobacco?... , answer correctly so that you will not be found on the wrong, when you go there and steal tobacco yet you have said no?

Daughter: *(ee)*

Daughter: (yes)

Father: *Mincho taa lkulie payiani lkidong lo lpayian. Lenye openy*

Father: Make sure you dont give your husband's tobacco calabash to any other man. It belongs to him alone.

Father: *Kore too kuna pooki kincho yie mayian. Shomie seriani, nuwuon supat,.....mukumputa lturen too nkeru, o too swom.*

Father: With all these we give you all our blessings. Go well, stay well, have many children, goats, sheep and cows.

In the above conversation, the man dominates throughout. The responses of the initiate are minimal and sometimes predetermined such that she has no choice apart from saying yes. This reveals that the father (though his agemate) has more power and control over the girl who has no chance to give her opinion in the conversation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The results of this study reveal that TFI is not just a social identity practice but also a deep rooted cultural practice that dictates the position of men and women in the community. The men are vested with the power to reach their God and call on him to bless the girl. The women are partial in the prayer; just agreeing with what the man says and are relegated to performing domestic chores only. The influential position of the man leaves the woman with one option; to obey the man. For instance, the initiate girl is brought a man she has never seen and told to accept him for marriage. She has no option but to accept this since she has no power to reject him lest she is cursed.

Father: *Itonyorryayie dei ale payian metaa lino ntarasi...?*

Daughter: *(ee paa:pa....)*

Father: Have you accepted this man to be your husband forever...?

Daughter: (yes father)

It is also clear that the man talks a lot in the conversation and the girl just says one word or two to accept what the man says. This may appear just normal to this community because it is the usual routine but according to van Dijk (1993:271), this is how a powerful group controls and manipulates the less powerful for selfish interests. In the process of carrying out TFI it is surprising that though it is a women practice, men play most of the significant roles and leave women with the subordinate roles in the ceremony.

TFI determines whether someone belongs or not, whether one is a woman or not. The names given to the initiated girl are praiseworthy and face lifting with several privileges attached; this makes them In-group accepted members of the community. On the other hand, the references given to the girls who reject initiation make them Out-groups; the rejected 'Other' leading to loss of face and all the privileges of a women in the community such as marriage, owning wealth, attending public functions among others. This isolation is too much for the girls that have rejected initiation and so silently, this isolation perpetuates the practice since every girl wants to be accepted in her community. All these observations imply that TFI is not a one day ceremony but an ideology that controls power relations and the way of life among the Samburu. The TFI practice can be well understood and managed if the TFI discourse is studied, understood and corrected. The negative female identity given in the TFI discourse should be done away with or replaced. This will help to avoid the stigmatization that steadily perpetuates TFI because every female person in Samburu is forced to avoid the negative references only by undergoing TFI.

References

- Barber, G. (2010) Female genital mutilation: A review. *Practice Nursing Journal* 21, no. 2: 62.
- Barth, F. (1981) *Process and form in social life: Selected essays of Fredrik Barth*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Boyle, E. H. (2002) *Female genital cutting: Cultural conflicts in the global community*. Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Cameron, D. (2001) *Working with spoken discourse*. London: Sage.
- Denniston, G. C., Hodges, F, & Milos, M. (2000) *Understanding circumcision A multi-disciplinary approach to a multi-dimensional problem*. New York. Minority rights group press.
- Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and power*. New York: Longman.

- Feldman-Jacobs, C., & Ryniak, S., (2006) *Abandoning female genital mutilation/cutting: An in-depth look at promising practices*. Washington: PRB.
- Juez L., (2009) *Perspectives on discourse analysis: Theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- KhosraviNik, M. (2010) Actor descriptions, action attributions, and argumentation: Towards a systemization of CDA analytical categories in the representation of social groups. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7: 1, 55-72.
- Mahero, E., & Ndoro, P. (2016) Female Genital Mutilation referencing: An impediment to literacy in girls and women among the Samburu people of Kenya. *Journal of Education and Human Resources (JEDHURE)* 8, Issue 1. 97-107.
- Mbiu, C. (2012) *Discursive construction of social space across genders; A case study of Mugithi song and dance performance*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Egerton University, Kenya.
- Ministry of Health (1999) National plan of action for the elimination of female genital mutilation in Kenya, 1999-2019. Nairobi: Ministry of Health, Government of Kenya.
- Momoh, C. (2005) FGM and issues of gender and human rights of women. In Momoh, C. (Ed.) *Female Genital Mutilation*. United Kingdom: Raddiffe Publishing.
- Packer, C. (2005) Circumcision and human rights discourse. In Nnaemeka, O. & Ezeilo, J. (Eds.) *Engendering human rights: Cultural and socio- economic realities in Africa*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001) *Discourse and discrimination*. London: Routledge.
- UNICEF (2003) Overview of FGM/Cutting. Nigeria FGM/Cutting country profile. UNICEF Nigeria DHS.
- United Nations Human Rights Report (2006) *Harmful traditional practices affecting women and children*. Fact Sheet No. 23 New York.
- The Children Act, 2001 [Kenya], No. 8 of 2001, 31 December 2001. Retrieved July 11, 2018 from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47975f332.html>
- Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) (1998). Calverton, Maryland: NDPD, CBS, and MI.
- Utz-Billing, I. I., & Kentenich, H. H. (2008) Female genital mutilation: An injury, physical and mental harm. *Journal of psychosomatic obstetrics & gynaecology*, 29(4), 225-229.
- van Dijk, T. (2001) Multidisciplinary CDA. In Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (Eds.) *Methods of critical discourse analysis: Introducing qualitative methods*. London: Sage.
- van Dijk (1993) Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, vol. 4, pp. 249- 283
- Wodak, R. (2007) Pragmatics and critical discourse analysis. A cross-disciplinary analysis. *Pragmatics and cognition*, 15:1, 203-225.
- Wodak, R. (2001) The Discourse-historical approach. In Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (Eds.) *Methods of critical discourse analysis: Introducing qualitative method*. (pp. 63-94). London: Sage.
- World Health Organization Report (WHO) (2008) Female Genital Mutilation. Retrieved November 12, 2012, from http://www.who.int/topics/female_genital_mutilation/en/
- Yoder, P.S., & Khan, S. (2007) Numbers of women circumcised in Africa: The production of a total. Calverton: Macro International Inc.