



## Woman in Culture and Arts

### The Structure of Gender and Contradictory Masculinity in Oral Literature

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Introduction

It is feasible to investigate oral culture and proverbs in order to comprehend the elements of Iranian men's masculinity as a field of men's studies. Men's studies is a new, emerging discipline within the fields of sociology and gender studies that has made significant strides in the understanding of men, including their behavior, expectations, attributions, and inherent identity. It is crucial to analyze proverbs because they serve as a conduit between the researcher and popular culture, enabling the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the societal members' perspectives. The content analysis method was employed to conduct this qualitative research. 803 proverbs were selected and analyzed in this study, with the following keywords: man, spouse, son-in-law, uncle, father, and son. The analysis of the content of proverbs resulted in seventy-eight sub-components out of ten general components. The centrality of the general component "Masculinity as a contradictory phenomenon" was ultimately determined. The paradoxical issue of masculinity originates from an unclear situation that means that it is unclear when men have been characterized by these traits and whether there has ever been a time when men exhibited distinct masculinity behavior. The second aspect of masculinity as a contradictory entity is the opposition and conflict with women. It is the site of investigation into the reasons and processes that result in a divergent and contradictory understanding, ultimately resulting in an opposition. Consequently, numerous evidences have been presented.

One of the newest emergent fields in sociology and gender studies is men's studies. These studies have made a significant contribution to the understanding of men, including their behavior, expectations, characteristics, and fundamental masculine identity. To use the term "Gender and Family" is to reject the previous phrase, "Woman and Family," which equated family with women while excluding males. Men are exempt from influencing the family and being recognized within it, according to the hypothesis. A variety of methods and perspectives may be employed to fulfill the requirements of men's studies. One of the perspectives in which Men's Studies are at the core of the society in which people's daily lives move is the reference to general culture and folklore. This research, which falls under the umbrella of Men's Studies, aims to identify the elements of masculinity that are present in Iranian proverbs.

##### Methodology

This study employed the qualitative method of content analysis to compile all Iranian gender proverbs in its interpretative paradigm, which was accomplished through the subsequent four-step process:

1. Conducting a search and gathering sources that have previously addressed the proverbs, while simultaneously compiling a list of them.
2. Eliminating the proverbs.
3. Gender-specific proverbs.
4. The conventional content analysis procedure is implemented.

The aforementioned process has involved the examination and analysis of 1545 gender proverbs. The analysis of 803 proverbs with a masculine subject and applying the following Farsi keywords revealed a contradiction: Mard (man), Mardānegī (masculinity), Showhar (husband), Pesar (boy), Farzand (son), Dāiē (maternal uncle), 'Amū (paternal uncle), Dāmād (son-in-law), Khānewādeh (family), and Ezedwāj (marriage).

##### Results

The components of masculinity that are derived from the analysis of the content of

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masculine-oriented gender proverbs would be significant in a variety of characteristics and attributes. The components were divided into two categories: general characteristics and family (role) characteristics. General characteristics encompass those that are either explicitly associated with masculinity or those that are prohibited for men.

The characteristics of masculinity that are directly related to the general title of “gender adequacy” are the apparent ones by which men are known, as well as the positive and negative internal characteristics that men should possess, or for whom their possession is considered a negative attribute. The prohibited characteristics of men are divided into two categories: inappropriate masculinity characteristics and feminine characteristics that men are prohibited from possessing. Two categories of men's roles and family characteristics are associated with their pivotal and intermediary roles. The pivotal roles of males are father and husband, while their intermediary roles are son, brother, uncle, and son-in-law, as indicated in the proverbs.

The most significant and pivotal role of men is that of a husband, as evidenced by the gender proverbs. The role of a husband encompasses several sub-components, including the responsibility of overseeing the household's finances, the obligation to educate women, and the privileges of being a husband. Men are responsible for generating and maintaining a living as the financial director of the household. Furthermore, males have been provided with guidance on how to interact with women in general and allow violence in particular, as they are responsible for women's education.

The facilities of being a husband, which include the specific possibility and opportunity to remarry and divorce, are among the other characteristics of a husband as described in proverbs. Family formation is the second sub-component associated with the aforementioned role from the perspective of males. The formation of a family is comprised of several sub-components, including the act of marriage and the criteria for an ideal wife, such as physical appearance, chastity, and widowhood. From the perspective of males, marriage is the culmination of the masculine identity, despite the absence of equilibrium between its advantages and disadvantages. This imbalance between the sexual benefits of women for men and the expenses they must incur to obtain them is imposed upon men, as indicated by the available proverbs.

#### **Conclusion**

“Masculinity as a contradictory subject” was identified as the essential element of the 803 gender proverbs that were examined. The initial ambiguous circumstance is the characteristic of “masculinity as a contradictory subject.” The ambiguity of masculinity implies that it is unclear when these characteristics were exhibited by men and whether there was a period in which they exhibited distinct masculine behavior from women. The second aspect of “masculinity as a contradictory subject” pertains to the opposition and disagreements with women. It is crucial to investigate the reasons for and the processes by which being distinct enables one to achieve a comprehensive understanding. Ultimately, the distinction that was previously perceived as a distinction between males and women has evolved into a conflict between them, and there is a wealth of evidence to support this.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

This article is free of any conflicts of interest.

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