LANGUAGE OF DEROGATION AND CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF FEMALE GENDER IN DHOLUO, SIAYA- KENYA

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the candidate

This research thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree at any other Institution. The University reserves the right to publish this document.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my dear parents and my congregation for their unconditional love and care, which made me believe in myself.

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I thank the Almighty God for granting me physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health and nourishment. I would also like to thank my classmates for their material and spiritual support. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors, Dr. Robert Onyango Ochieng' and Dr. Leonorah Lutiali Mugalla, for their invaluable support, mentorship, and guidance in achieving this great accomplishment. I am also grateful to all the lecturers in the Department of Languages, Literature, and Communication for playing an instrumental role in my academic growth.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychological Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Dholuo	is a Nilotic language spoken by the Luo ethnic group in Kenya
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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ABSTRACT

Persistent use of derogatory language in everyday communication significantly contributes to the conceptualization and reinforcement of gender stereotypes, particularly within culturally rooted linguistic communities. This study examines how the Dholuo language in Kenya conceptualizes the female gender through proverbs, idioms, metaphors, and speech acts, with a view to identifying their forms, meanings, and impact. The study was guided by three objectives: (i) to categorize derogatory expressions such as proverbs, idioms, insults, and metaphors used to refer to women in the Dholuo language; (ii) to analyse the underlying conceptual metaphors, idioms and cultural contexts that inform these expressions; (ii) to evaluate the impact of linguistic expressions such as proverbs, idioms, insults, and metaphors on gender perception among Dholuo speakers. Anchored in Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, Searle's classification of illocutionary, locutionary and perlocutionary acts, and Grice's (1991)Theory of Implicature, the study employed a qualitative research design to ensure both breadth and depth of understanding. The population comprised Dholuo-speaking communities in Siaya County. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) respondents. In contrast, purposive sampling guided the selection of fifteen (15) key informants and four (4) focus group discussions (FGDs) involving elders, women leaders, teachers, and youth. Data collection instruments included a semi-structured interview guides; and FGD protocols. SPSS was used for descriptive statistical analysis, and NVivo was used to support thematic coding and the interpretation of qualitative data. Findings reveal that while many Dholuo expressions are culturally embedded, they disproportionately portray women as emotionally weak, domestically confined, or intellectually inferior. Education and religious affiliation were found to moderate how these expressions are internalized and contested. The study recommends gender-sensitive linguistic reforms, the integration of inclusive civic education, and community dialogues that question and transform harmful cultural narratives embedded in qualitative usage. These reforms as persistent for promoting gender equality within culturally rich but linguistically conservative communities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Pragmatics, a key subfield of linguistics, explores how people use language in context to perform actions and convey meaning. Globally, scholars have paid increasing attention to how language, particularly derogatory language, shapes perception and social reality. Studies by Croom (2011, 2013) describe derogatory language as purposefully insulting, often used to demean individuals or groups. For instance, Croom examines the term nigger, arguing that it functions to dehumanize African Americans by portraying them as lazy, unintelligent, or emotionally shallow. Similarly, Roadman and Ashmore (2007) identify a wide range of derogatory expressions, including racial slurs, sexist language, and verbal bullying that reveal broader social attitudes and hierarchies.

These scholars emphasize how derogatory language is deeply embedded in social interaction and power dynamics. Further research, such as that by Bilewicz and Soral (2020) and Brown (2018), focused on the spread of hate speech via digital platforms. These studies highlight the role of online anonymity and reach in amplifying harmful language. Brown (2018) argues that the persistence of offensive digital content has reshaped societal norms, making hate speech more visible and socially tolerated. Strengths of these global studies include their use of interdisciplinary methods drawing from psychology, sociology, and discourse analysis to examine how language can reinforce prejudice and discrimination. However, a key limitation is their general focus on Western societies. They overlook specific local cultures, traditions, and gendered dynamics in

language use. Additionally, while they acknowledge group-based discrimination, few of these studies address how such language specifically targets and affects women, particularly in intersectional contexts such as race and religion (Morales *et al.,* 2019; Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

This gap presents an opportunity for the present study to explore how derogatory language in pragmatic use contributes to the negative conceptualization of the female gender, especially in non-Western contexts.

Within African contexts, derogatory language is shaped by local cultures and societal norms, political structures, and colonial histories. Studies show that language use reflects deep-rooted inequalities, and it plays a role in reinforcing group hierarchies and marginalization. For instance, Gopalkrishnan (2013) argues that language exposure shapes how people view themselves and others, often leading to internalized inferiority or superiority. This view is echoed in Banks (2013), who notes that language used in speech or writing shapes how people understand and construct reality, and how it is linked to social control mechanisms.

In many African countries, including Kenya, language diversity presents both richness and tension. Kimotho and Nyaga (2016), Kenya's more than forty-seven ethnic groups use language not only as a tool for communication but also for asserting dominance, often at the expense of minority groups. The unrestricted use of language on social media has also led to a rise in slurs and hate speech, often targeting marginalized identities.

One strength of these regional studies is their attention to the sociopolitical and cultural functions of language, especially in multilingual contexts. However, they fail to examine how derogatory language targets women, or how gender intersects with ethnicity and class in everyday language practices. This lack of gendered analysis limits the understanding of how language

reinforces negative female stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, a major research gap lies in understanding how pragmatic use of language in African settings shapes the conceptualization of the female gender, especially in both offline and online discourse.

Locally in Kenya, empirical research acknowledges that language serves as a means of expressing cultural identity, power, and control. As Banks (2010) noted, Kenya's multiethnic composition creates a platform for examining how language functions across different communities. In practice, language is often used to authorize group hierarchies, exclude outsiders, and enforce norms. Studies have documented the use of derogatory language in political speeches, online discussions, and everyday conversations, particularly targeting women, ethnic minorities, and youth (Douglas, 2007). However, there is still limited research that explicitly connects this language to pragmatic theory, or that investigates its effects on how society conceptualizes women.

A growing concern is the rise in offensive slang, hate speech, and gender-based verbal abuse on social media platforms in Kenya. Kimotho and Nyaga (2016). While existing research captures these linguistic trends, there is a lack of empirical focus on how this language influences perceptions of the female gender and contributes to systemic marginalization (Atieno,2019). The weakness of local research lies in its descriptive nature. Many studies observe that hate speech and slurs exist, but do not critically examine how these forms of language function pragmatically to perpetuate prejudice, discrimination, or identity disintegration.

Additionally, little is said about the intersectionality of derogatory language how women who belong to ethnic, religious, or economic minorities are especially vulnerable to verbal attacks. Given the global, regional, and local gaps identified above, the current study seeks to examine the pragmatic functions of derogatory language in shaping the conceptualization of the female gender in Kenya. Specifically, the study will investigate how language both online and offline is used to

reinforce negative stereotypes, perpetuate gender-based discrimination, and influence public perception (Atieno, 2019). This study focuses on the pragmatics of derogatory speech, with attention to speech acts, context, intention, and audience reception. It draws on prior global and regional research but grounds its analysis in the local Kenyan context, where ethnic diversity and digital media use create a complex setting for language interaction.

Therefore, this study applied a pragmatic and gender-sensitive lens, deploying the use of speech acts and conversational implicatures to analyze the Dholuo derogatory words that target women and the marginalized and how they shape the societal conceptualization of female gender. The study addresses critical gaps in understanding the social functions of derogatory language. It contributes to the broader field of linguistic pragmatics while offering insights that could inform policies and interventions aimed at reducing verbal gender-based discrimination in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to the emerging changes in societal construction, socio-political landscape, and globalization, the increasing propagation of discriminatory language on social media and in society is a great concern in language and communication. Therefore, the current study focuses on derogatory forms of language and the potential negative consequences it has on both the marginalized groups at the receiving end of such language and society at large.

Like many other indigenous African languages, the Dholuo language contains words, utterances, and expressions such as idioms, metaphors, and sayings that mirror gender stereotypes and encourage male dominance. The uncritical use of these linguistic patterns often contributes to the normalization of gender-based discrimination and violence. Despite the growing awareness of gender inequality in Kenya, there is limited research on how language, particularly in indigenous contexts, perpetuates these inequalities. This study addresses this gap by examining the derogatory

language used to conceptualize women in Dholuo. The problem is significant because language not only reflects societal attitudes but also has the power to shape them, making it a critical area of inquiry for gender equality advocates.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyse how the language of derogation in Dholuo conceptualises the female gender within the Luo community in Kenya.

1.4 Specific Objectives

I. To analyse derogatory expressions such as proverbs, idioms, insults, and metaphors used to refer to women in the Dholuo language

II. To analyse the underlying conceptual metaphors, idioms and cultural contexts that inform these expressions.

III. To evaluate the impact of linguistic expressions such as proverbs, idioms, insults, and metaphors on gender perception among Dholuo speakers.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the common derogatory terms and expressions used for women in Dholuo?

2. What cultural and conceptual metaphors underpin the use of these derogatory expressions?

3. How do these expressions shape and reflect societal attitudes toward women among Dholuo speakers?

1.6 Justification of the Study

The justification for this study lies in its potential to contribute to both academic and practical discourses on gender and language. Academically, the research adds to the growing body of literature on pragmatics, sociolinguistics and gender studies, particularly in African contexts

(Mwangi, 2021). Practically, the findings of this study can inform interventions aimed at promoting gender-sensitive language use in the Luo community and beyond. By identifying and analysing derogatory terms, the study provides a foundation for linguistic reforms that can challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality. Furthermore, the mixed-method approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the issue, combining qualitative insights with quantitative data to provide a nuanced perspective.

While substantial research has documented sexist language across many cultures, there remains a need for focused studies on indigenous Kenyan languages such as Dholuo. Most existing studies either generalise across Bantu languages or are anecdotal. The current study seeks to fill this gap by offering a systematic analysis of derogatory terms, metaphors, and cultural implications, specifically in the Dholuo context. Additionally, previous research has not sufficiently explored the gendered impact of such expressions, particularly on women's psychological and social outcomes. By integrating linguistic analysis with cultural, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how derogatory language shapes and sustains gender perceptions in the Luo community.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is significant in the following ways:

Contribution to Linguistics:

The research offers insights into the interplay between language and gender, specifically how derogatory language contributes to gender bias. It enhances understanding within sociolinguistics by examining how Dholuo speakers encode sexism in language (Lakoff, 1975). It is significant as the

findings provide relevant data for ongoing debates in feminist linguistic studies and pragmatics. It enriches the literature on African languages by documenting linguistic sexism in an under-researched language context. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study serves as a methodological template for similar pragmatic studies. The integration of qualitative and quantitative techniques illustrates how nuanced gender-based linguistic data can be systematically explored.

1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study focuses on the linguistic expressions used in the Dholuo language that contribute to the derogation and conceptualisation of the female gender. Specifically, it investigates how proverbs, idioms, metaphors, jokes, and informal speech acts portray women and shape societal attitudes toward gender roles within Dholuo-speaking communities. The research is limited to one county in western Kenya, Siaya, where the Dholuo language is dominantly spoken. The study targets Dholuo-speaking adults aged 18 and above, from varied age groups, education levels, and religious backgrounds, enabling a representative understanding of how these demographic variables moderate the impact of language on gender perception. The scope further encompasses the analysis of both overt and implicit meanings of expressions, using Austin's Speech Act Theory, Searle's classification of illocutionary acts, and Grice's theory of conversational implicature to guide interpretation. The research uses a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, FGDs, and content analysis.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

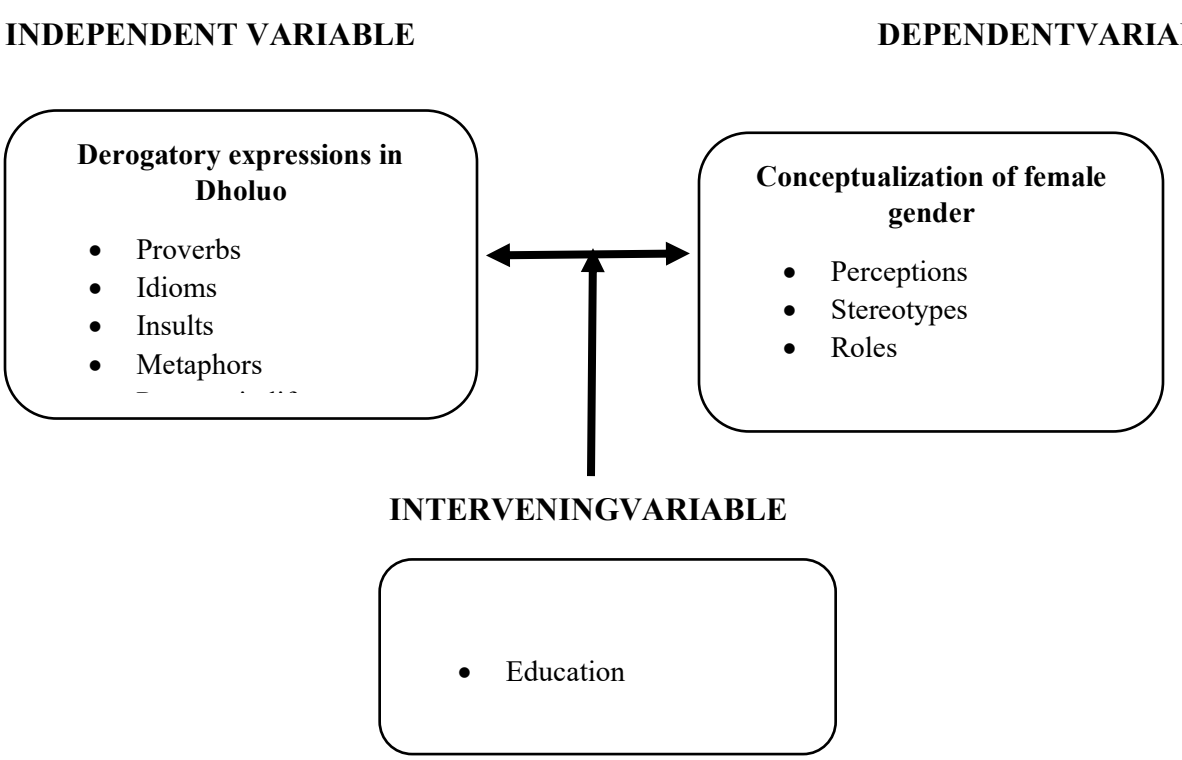
However, this study is delimited in several ways to maintain focus and manageability. Firstly, it is restricted to Dholuo-speaking regions in Kenya and does not account for gendered expressions in other Kenyan languages or communities. Secondly, the study limits its exploration

to adult participants aged 18 and above, thereby excluding insights from adolescents who may also be affected by and contributors to gendered language use. Thirdly, while the study explores how language contributes to gender conceptualisation, it does not extend to analyzing the actual behavioral outcomes or broader institutional effects, such as legal or economic disparities. In addition, the study does not include a longitudinal component, but captures perceptions at one point in time rather than changes over time. Finally, although informed by three key linguistic theories, the study does not incorporate feminist linguistic theory or critical gender theory in depth to maintain a focused pragmatic approach.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

According to Leshem and Trafford (2007), a conceptual framework serves as a framework for structuring and maintaining thoughts, providing a systematic method for organizing abstract concepts. While it can occasionally be innovative or imaginative, it typically tends to be rigid rather than flexible. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 below illustrates that frequent use of derogatory expressions contributes to a shared societal view that limits and devalues women. However, this influence may vary depending on a speaker's age, level of education, or religious affiliation.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher (2025) LIKUNG'AGNES

The diagramatic framework in figure 1 above, posits that frequent use of derogatory expressions contributes to a shared societal view that limits and devalues women. However, this influence may vary depending on a speaker's age, level of education, or religious affiliation.

1.10 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Derogatory Language- refers to verbal expressions in Dholuo including proverbs, idioms, insults, metaphors, jokes, and common sayings—that demean, belittle, or portray the female gender in a negative light. These include both overt and implicit (suggestive) forms of linguistic bias against women.

Conceptualisation of Female Gender: refers to the cognitive and cultural understanding of women's identity, roles, status, and capabilities as

influenced by the meanings embedded in language. This includes stereotypes, expected behaviors, and the perceived value of women within the Dholuo community.

Speech Act: A communicative expression in Dholuo that performs a function such as commanding, insulting, asserting, or warning based on Austin's and Searle's theories. Derogatory speech acts are treated as those that function to control or diminish women's agency.

Conversational Implicature: The implied meaning in speech that is not directly stated but inferred based on context, as per Grice's theory. This study includes euphemisms and indirect comparisons that portray women in demeaning or inferior ways.

Moderating Variable: a variable that influences the strength or direction of the relationship between derogatory language and gender conceptualization. In this study, moderators include:

Age: Age brackets of respondents (e.g., 18–35, 36–55, 56+ years)

Education: Highest level of formal education attained

Religion: Religious affiliation and level of religious participation

Pragmatics is the language used to perform an act in different context

An Illocutionary Act as a declaration of personal view or intent, an illocutionary act is one of asserting, demanding, promising, suggesting, exclaiming, vowing – essentially, anything that you can plausibly put the pronoun I in front of (I warn you, I urge you, I thank you).

Implicature: denotes either (i) the act of meaning or suggesting one thing by saying something else, or (ii) the object of that Act.

Legitimization , justification, or validation of something

Locutionary Act in speech-act theory, a locutionary act is making a meaningful utterance, a stretch of spoken language preceded by silence and followed by silence or a change of speaker—also known as a locution or an utterance act.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study, highlighting the significance of language in shaping gender ideologies and the specific focus on the Dholuo language. The problem statement underscores the lack of research on derogatory language in indigenous African languages and its implications for gender equality. The justification for the study lies in its potential to contribute to both academic and practical discourses on gender and language. The conceptual framework, grounded in Austin's and Grices' pragmatic Theory, provides a robust foundation for analyzing the linguistic mechanisms of derogation in Dholuo. The next chapters will delve into the methodology, findings, and recommendations of the study, offering a comprehensive analysis of the

conceptualization of the female gender in Dholuo and its implications for gender equality in Kenya.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Language is a powerful cultural artifact that not only reflects but also shapes social attitudes, identities, and ideologies. In many societies, the way women are spoken about or spoken to often reveals deeply entrenched gender biases and inequalities. In patriarchal communities, especially within African linguistic contexts like Dholuo, derogatory expressions targeting women are embedded in proverbs, idioms, jokes, and metaphors. These linguistic forms influence how the female gender is perceived, conceptualised, and treated in social spaces. This chapter reviews theoretical perspectives and empirical literature relevant to the study, organises findings around research objectives, identifies knowledge gaps, and summarises the literature.

The empirical literature review focused on the association between Derogatory expressions in Dholuo such as: (proverbs, idioms, insults, metaphors, and the Conceptualisation of female gender such as: (perceptions, stereotypes, roles). The review was structured into several subsections that explore different dimensions of Derogatory expressions in Dholuo and Conceptualisation of female gender and their interrelations while also identifying gaps in the existing literature. According to Galvan and Galvan (2017), primary publications serve as the primary reservoirs for comprehensive insights into research methodologies and findings. In alignment with this principle, this section delves into the empirical literature surrounding the derogatory expressions in Dholuo and the conceptualisation of female gender. The review spans global, regional, and local perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the constructs under study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The following theories were used to build a theoretical literature review in light of the research variables and to deduce the relationship between the two variables, and hence how they account for observed behavior.

This study is underpinned by two major linguistic theories: Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962), and Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature (1991). These theories provide the analytical lens to interpret how Dholuo expressions function beyond literal meanings and how they impact the conceptualisation of gender.

2.2.1 Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962)

This theory (as cited by Smith 2013), pioneered by Austin (1962) and further refined by Searle (1969), posits that language is not only used to describe reality but to perform actions known as speech acts. The theory is therefore concerned more with how utterances function not only to convey information but also to perform actions. Hence, it is particularly fitting for this research as it describes the functions of a speech act and the actions it entails. Furthermore, it delves into the speaker's intended message (illocutionary), the literal words used (locutionary), and the effect of the message on the listener (perlocutionary). Moreover, the speech act assists the listener in determining the underlying meaning of the communication by examining what is said, the basic intention, and the contextual impact of the words as they are categorically expressed in assertions, directives, commisive, expressive, and declarations.

In this study, derogatory expressions in Dholuo are analyzed as illocutionary acts they do not merely describe women but act upon them by reinforcing inferiority, submissiveness, or moral judgments. For instance, calling a woman "ng'ama oketo chiemo e lweny" (literally: one who stirs

food in war) acts to question her domestic or moral competence.. Key concepts applied in this study such as:

Locutionary Acts: The literal utterance itself (e.g., “She’s a wandering woman”).

Illocutionary Acts: The intended function of the statement (e.g., to insult, shame, or warn others about a woman’s perceived behavior).

Perlocutionary Acts: The actual effect on the hearer (e.g., reinforcing stereotypes, humiliating the subject, or provoking laughter or disgust). For example:

In Dholuo, a phrase like "Nyako ma o ketho ode’ (A woman who cannot keep a home) functions illocutionarily as a judgmental act, implying that a woman lacks virtue or stability. The perlocutionary effect might be social exclusion, gossip, or moral shaming. Though grammatically simple, such utterances serve to enact gender policing, thus illustrating how language performs societal functions (Searle, 1969). Its relevance to this study is that this theory allows the researcher to categorize and interpret derogatory statements not just by content, but by function. It highlights how language constructs social realities and gender roles, which is central to the study’s objective of analyzing how language shapes perceptions of women. .Austin (1962) proposed that language is performative; utterances do not merely convey information but also perform actions. He introduced three dimensions of speech:

Locutionary acts: The act of saying something.

Illocutionary acts: The intended function of the utterance (e.g., commanding, insulting).

Perlocutionary acts: The effect on the listener.

In Dholuo, statements like “dhako ok nyal bedo ruoth” (“a woman cannot be a ruler”) are not just descriptive but performative which serves to reinforce social norms that restrict women's roles and power.

Searle further expanded Austin’s theory by classifying illocutionary acts into five types:

Assertives (e.g., stating, claiming), Directives (e.g., commanding, requesting), Commissives (e.g., promising), Expressives (e.g., apologizing, praising), Declarations (e.g., appointing, firing).

In this study, Dholuo expressions used to refer to women (e.g., “dhako en pesa mar wuoth, a woman is walking money”) often function as expressives and directives, indicating cultural disapproval and expectations of gendered behavior.

2.2.2 Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature (1991)

Grice’s theory explains how speakers often imply more than what is explicitly stated. This theory emphasizes the importance of context and the speaker’s intended meaning. The origin of the theory introduced by H.P. Grice (1975), this theory explores how people understand implied meanings in everyday communication. It operates on four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner. Therefore, the Key Concepts Applied in This Study, such as implicature, refers to meanings that are implied rather than explicitly stated. Conversational maxims, Grice argued, speakers usually follow certain cooperative principles unless intentionally flouting them to imply something deeper The theory investigated the implicit meanings and hidden implications conveyed through derogatory language, shedding light on how discriminatory language violates the cooperative principle and contributes to negative perception and violence against marginalized groups.

In derogatory usage, a Dholuo speaker might say something innocuous on the surface, which by cultural and conversational implicature carries sexist or demeaning connotations. For example, the phrase "nyako ma odoko gi nyathi mang'eny" (a woman with many children) may imply a lack of self-control or promiscuity depending on context. Grice's maxims of relevance, manner, and quantity are instrumental in unpacking these hidden meanings.

Its application example:

A Dholuo speaker may say:"Nyako ma okony gi pesa" (A woman who helps with money)

While this seems positive, the context and tone can imply she is transactional or promiscuous, flouting the maxim of Manner (being obscure) and Relevance to imply moral looseness. This indirect derogation is decoded using Grice's framework of implicature. Another example: "In nyako mondo i winjo" (You're a woman, so you should understand)

Here, the implicature is that being a woman inherently includes emotional or inferior traits. Though not directly insulting, the phrase normalizes gendered expectations and subtly disempowers. Grice (1991) proposed that effective communication follows four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. When these are violated, implicatures, unstated meanings, are generated. In Dholuo, speech such as metaphorical references to women (e.g., comparing a woman to a goat) may implicate inferiority, irrationality, or disposability without direct statements. This helps speakers subtly reinforce gender stereotypes without being overt. Together, these theories help uncover the hidden gender ideologies encoded in Dholuo expressions, showing how language perpetuates social control over women.

Grice's theory remained relevant to this study because its allows the researcher to uncover covert or nuanced forms of derogation, especially in metaphors, proverbs, or sarcastic expressions.

These are often context-dependent and culturally embedded, making implicature analysis crucial to fully appreciating the derogatory conceptualisations of women.

Both theories enabled an understanding of how and why speakers use language that subtly or overtly derogates women. This dual-theoretical lens allows the researcher to go beyond surface meaning and uncover deeper, culturally rooted ideologies embedded in language. By combining Speech Act Theory and Grice's Theory of Implicature, the study can approach language not only as a tool of communication but as a performative and interpretive mechanism that shapes how women are conceptualized in the Dholuo-speaking community. This dual-framework offers a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond surface meanings, revealing both the explicit and implicit ways in which derogatory gender ideologies are embedded in language.

2.3 Dependent Variable

The study's dependent variable: conceptualization of female gender, focused on how women are perceived, understood and positioned in Luo community in the dholuo linguistic expressions. This conceptualization of female gender is culturally embedded and transmitted through linguistic expression such as metaphors, idiom and proverb. Example 'dhako lewe bor'' (women gossip), is a proverb which can shame, or stereotype women within the Luo community in Kenya. These linguistic forms shapes social reality and women status hence designing women steryotype and reinforcing gender ideology in the society.

2.4 Derogatory Expressions as Speech Acts and Implicatures

Language universally plays a role in encoding societal power hierarchies, with women often portrayed through derogatory or demeaning labels. Globally, sexist language is a subject of concern. In Italy, Cutugno et al. (2020) found that 67% of participants used idioms that portrayed women as irrational or weak. These expressions influenced how women were perceived in both

public and private spheres. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2019) add that lexical asymmetry where male terms are neutral or positive (e.g., “bachelor”) and female counterparts are pejorative (e.g., “spinster”) mirrors societal biases. Holmes and Marra (2019) further argue that even workplace discourse reveals subtler gendered hierarchies, with women’s assertive behavior often coded as “aggressive” or “bossy,” terms rarely applied to men.

Regarding the use of derogative language like slur or hate speech, previous research has shown that derogatory language is inherently linked to social hierarchies, both in the manner it is used and its impacts (Rosette et al., 2013). Compared to members of socially subordinate groups, those of superior social status in the society are more likely to use racial slurs on the inferior group of low social status but are less likely to be at the receiving end of such language discrimination and, notably, due to their high status, are less likely to speak up when overhearing others use racial slurs. Additionally, when slurs are directed toward low-status groups, they become too offensive and create a negative impact on the receiver (Henry et al., 2014). Importantly, this study has noted that hate speech and racial slurs are used depending on the social hierarchy. Thus, the domineering group uses derogative language on those of low status. Presumably since women are categorically falling in the realm of the low-status characters, they are more likely to receive the slur, hence the emotional effect.

On the African continent, gendered derogation through language remains prevalent. Adegbite and Moyo (2021) identify common Hausa expressions such as karuwa (prostitute) and banza (useless woman), used to control and stigmatize female agency. These expressions reflect deeper cultural anxieties around female sexuality and autonomy. Cameron (2020) highlights how in English and other Indo-European languages, gendered slurs like “slut” or “bitch” objectify and devalue women. These terms often focus on women’s sexual behavior or emotional expression,

reinforcing patriarchal ideals of how a “proper” woman should act. Chisale (2022) adds that in Southern Africa, Bantu languages contain a wide array of idioms that associate women with danger, impurity, or incompetence. For example, the Zulu expression intombi ayifanelanga inkululeko (a girl does not deserve freedom) reflects cultural values that restrict women's independence. Similarly, Aboh and Akindele (2020) identify insulting metaphors in Yoruba, such as oko mi ni mo wa (I belong to my husband), used to reinforce submission and deny women’s individuality. These expressions normalize women's subjugation by anchoring it in everyday speech.

In East Africa, sexist expressions in local languages and Swahili are widely documented. Mwangi (2022) found that among the Kikuyu and Kamba, women are likened to domestic animals or tools, as in ng'ombe ya nyumbani (household cow), signifying obedience. These expressions reinforce the cultural ideal of women as docile and confined to domesticity. Wanjiku and Otieno (2021) show that Kiswahili proverbs such as mwanamke ni nyoka (a woman is a snake) not only degrade women but present them as inherently dangerous or manipulative. Kiswahili, often considered a lingua franca in East Africa, thus transmits misogynistic views across ethnic lines. Ndung’u (2019) adds that derogatory terms in Luhya, Kalenjin, and Maasai languages carry themes of female inadequacy, laziness, or over-dependence. The normalization of these expressions affects not only perception but also access to resources and opportunities for women.

In Dholuo, derogatory expressions are deeply rooted in cultural discourse. Owiti (2021) categorizes such terms based on themes of sexual immorality (jakwer – prostitute), economic strain (mama pek – expensive woman), and domestic failure (min keko – quarrelsome wife). These expressions stigmatize women who deviate from culturally sanctioned roles. Otieno and Achieng (2023) report that expressions like nyako ma ok gi pesa (girl not worth a bride price) devalue

unmarried women and commodify female worth. Similarly, nyako mar ratiro (a woman with no morals) is commonly used for women perceived as sexually free, reinforcing cultural purity norms.

In addition, Akinyi and Olang'o (2022) document terms such as "dhako ma ok nigi chike" (a woman without rules) and "nyako mar piny" (a loose village girl), used to shame women perceived as outspoken or socially mobile. These categorizations reveal the linguistic architecture of female marginalization in Dholuo society. In Africa, Chikwelu (2017) documented Igbo proverbs that depicted women as foolish, lustful, or dangerous. Balogun (2020) found that Yoruba proverbs objectified women, often linking their value to male control. Cameron (2020) found that everyday metaphors and idioms in English encode gender hierarchies. While informative, these studies are limited to West Africa and do not explore moderating variables.

In Kenya, Odhiambo (2019) and Ochola & Oduor (2021) revealed that many Dholuo idioms and metaphors associate women with animals or economic burdens, reinforcing stereotypes of inferiority. However, these studies were mostly descriptive and lacked a framework for speech acts or implicatures.

2.5 Language and Conceptualisation of Female Gender

Language shapes how societies define roles and expectations. According to Hingston & Asuelime (2019), speech acts such as proverbs are central to cultural moralizing. Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) theory of conceptual metaphors reveals how languages encode perceptions such as "WOMAN IS PROPERTY" or "WOMAN IS OBJECT." These metaphors frame women as less autonomous and more controllable, which linguistically justifies male dominance. Another study by Litosseliti (2020) applies this to English media, observing metaphors that portray women as temptresses (man-eaters), commodities (trophy wives), or emotional burdens (drama queens). These metaphors often intersect with race and class, further marginalizing women of color and

working-class women. In a related study, Sunderland (2021) argues that cultural metaphors of women as "vessels," "caretakers," or "home-makers" sustain gender inequality in both Western and non-Western discourse, even within liberal democracies. This demonstrates the persistence of metaphorical bias across linguistic contexts.

Makama (2020) categorizes Hausa metaphors of women as consumable, obedient, or chaotic, illustrating how language naturalizes gender roles. Women's value is measured by how well they conform to norms of silence, chastity, and obedience. In Igbo, Eze and Okonkwo (2021) identify the metaphor "WOMAN IS FIRE," used to describe women as unpredictable and dangerous, especially if unmarried. Such metaphors justify societal surveillance of female behavior. Chisale (2022) argues that these metaphors are deeply cultural, often reinforced through rituals, oral traditions, and elder authority. Proverbs and idioms embed these metaphors, ensuring their transmission from one generation to the next.

In East African cultures, women are often conceptualized as labor tools, property, or symbols of temptation. Mwangi (2022) notes that Kikuyu and Kiswahili expressions often metaphorically reduce women to animals (e.g., mbuzi ya bwana – husband's goat), linking obedience to value. In Ethiopia, Tadesse and Tesfaye (2021) reported that 75% of youth believed women were best suited for domestic roles based on cultural sayings. Wanjiku and Otieno (2021) explain how Swahili metaphors like mdudu wa mwanaume (a man's insect) reflect women's position as dependent and parasitic. These metaphors reinforce heteronormative patriarchal control over female sexuality. Additionally, Ochieng and Onyango (2023) in Western Kenya note that Luo metaphors conceptualize women as chaos bringers, evident in expressions like nyako mar ketho oganda (a woman who destroys the clan). This metaphor perpetuates fear of female leadership and independence.

Dholuo language contains rich metaphorical frameworks that underpin gender derogation. Achieng and Otieno (2023) highlight “WOMAN IS COMMODITY” in phrases such as nyako ma ok nyal bedo gi dhiang’ (a girl not worth a cow), reflecting the cultural significance of dowry in Luo traditions. Owuor (2022) shows that Dholuo metaphors such as dhako nyar bet (woman of the house) impose domestic identities and exclude women from public spheres. The metaphor "WOMAN IS TROUBLE" is also visible in minyiri (troublesome woman), reinforcing the idea that assertiveness in women is disruptive. Awuor and Odhiambo (2023) add that these metaphors are often normalized through storytelling, music, and marriage negotiations, making them powerful carriers of cultural gender ideologies

Another study by Akinyi (2022) on Kenyan rural communities found that women who challenged traditional roles were described using insulting terms. In Kisumu, Wekesa (2020) noted that Dholuo youth who use derogatory slang (e.g., “sikio ya mume”) normalize misogyny and disrespect in peer groups. These studies affirm that language directly influences identity and behavioral expectations, but do not assess how these effects differ across demographics.

2.6 Linguistic derogation as a tool of gender socialization and identity construction in dholuo society

Across the globe, scholars agree that language not only reflects societal attitudes but also plays an active role in shaping how individuals come to understand their gender identity. Cameron (2020) argues that sexist expressions such as calling women "bossy," "emotional," or "dramatic" are more than insults; they function as linguistic mechanisms that regulate women's behavior and limit their participation in public spheres. Such language socializes women into silence and submission while encouraging men to dominate conversations and leadership spaces. Similarly, Baker (2021) explores how linguistic derogation contributes to the internalization of gendered

norms in Western societies. He explains that frequent exposure to negative labels such as "nag," "slut," or "hysterical" shapes how women view themselves and others. These expressions serve as tools for self-policing, as women often adjust their behavior to avoid being stereotyped. Holmes and Schnurr (2020) highlight how such linguistic practices create asymmetrical power relations in workplaces, where assertive male speech is praised, while similar speech from women is penalized. This demonstrates that linguistic derogation is a subtle yet powerful form of gendered social control, influencing identity formation and access to opportunities from early socialization.

Both Bank (2010) and Bianchi et al. (2019) observed that both derogatory and neutral category labels activate stereotypes, and they do so to approximately equal degrees; however, derogatory labels are much more likely than neutral category labels to trigger a strongly negative affective and evaluative reaction, thus strongly perpetuating prejudice among the minority. These arguments were relevant to the study because they recognize how stereotypes or labels can discriminate against groups. The study focused on labels in the Dholuo Language that promote cultural stereotypes against women.

On the African continent, language is a deeply embedded vehicle for gendered cultural transmission. Adegbite and Moyo (2021) explain that in many African languages, women are regularly portrayed through metaphors and expressions that cast them as inferior, dangerous, or subservient. In Hausa, for instance, expressions like karuwa (prostitute) and banza (useless) are commonly used for women who defy traditional norms. These labels socialize women into compliance and shape male perceptions of female roles as inherently secondary. Chisale (2022) provides a Southern African perspective, arguing that women in many African societies learn from a young age that speaking out or resisting male dominance invites linguistic ridicule. Proverbs and idioms across Bantu languages link women to negative outcomes e.g., “a woman without a

husband is like a house without a roof" thereby constructing social expectations of dependence and obedience.

In Ghana, Osei and Mensah (2020) found that derogatory language in Twi and Ewe was used by elders, teachers, and religious leaders to define what constitutes a "good woman." Girls who deviated from these linguistic norms were labeled disrespectful or immoral. Over time, such exposure significantly influenced how both men and women perceived appropriate female behavior.

Within East Africa, linguistic expressions are closely tied to gendered expectations and the formation of identity. Mwangi and Wanjiru (2021), studying Kikuyu and Kamba communities, found that women were routinely referred to with expressions like mbuzi ya nyumbani (home goat), a metaphor that connotes docility and utility. Such terms teach women that their worth lies in being passive and serviceable. Boys and men, on the other hand, are praised for dominance and assertiveness, reinforcing gender hierarchies early in life. Namulundah (2020) observed similar trends in Uganda, where sexist expressions were normalized in schools and homes. Girls learned from an early age to be cautious about their speech and appearance to avoid being labeled with terms like omukazi w'ekizibu (troublesome woman). This linguistic policing of femininity shapes future behavior, career choices, and even relationships. This was relevant in analysing the impact of such labeling in a strictly patriarchal community like the Luo.

Ochieng and Oduor (2023), analyzing the linguistic practices of Kisii and Luhya speakers in Kenya, found that boys were encouraged to insult or mock girls using gendered slurs without repercussion. Such patterns create an environment in which derogatory language becomes an accepted and even humorous means of reinforcing male dominance and shaping female submission.

Among Dholuo speakers, linguistic derogation plays a central role in shaping perceptions and expectations of gender. Akinyi and Otieno (2023) conducted a qualitative study with Luo youth and found that repeated use of terms like nyako mar piny (a loose village girl) or dhako ma ok gi chike (a woman without rules) had profound effects on young women's self-esteem and life choices. These expressions frame female independence or assertiveness as deviant, leading to social exclusion or ridicule.

Nyang'or (2024) emphasizes that gendered language in Dholuo is part of intergenerational socialization, with elders using derogatory expressions to reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, unmarried women may be called nyako ma ok gi pesa (girl without dowry), which not only stigmatizes them but also ties their value to marriageability. Over time, such language becomes internalized, shaping how women view their worth and how men evaluate women.

Ouma and Atieno (2023) highlight that these expressions are often perpetuated through storytelling, song, and even religious instruction. Boys grow up believing that women must be controlled and corrected, while girls are taught that silence, humility, and marriage are their ultimate goals. This language-driven socialization constructs a gendered identity rooted in inequality, affecting participation in education, leadership, and public discourse.

Across global, continental, regional, and local contexts, the reviewed literature consistently confirms that linguistic derogation is a powerful force in shaping gendered identity and socialization. For Dholuo speakers, specifically, these expressions embed cultural expectations, regulate behavior, and create internalized hierarchies that influence both men's and women's perceptions of gender. The language people use and the meanings it carries deeply impact how gender is understood, lived, and passed on within the Luo community.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The reviewed literature confirms that language shapes gender perceptions globally, with proverbs, idioms, and metaphors that often depict women negatively. Studies from African contexts validate these findings but are limited by regional focus, theoretical depth, and the absence of demographic analysis. There is a need to discuss these impacts in the context of African indigenous communities. Kenya, the context chosen for the study, is an interesting area for this kind of investigation. The current study fills these gaps Austin's, Searle's, and Grice's frameworks to examine derogatory expressions in Dholuo and how they are interpreted across age, religious, and educational groups, and how they flout the maxim of manner and quality, using a qualitative method. It thus contributes a theoretically grounded, culturally embedded understanding of gendered language in Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study, aligning with the study's philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. It details the research design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, research tools, data analysis techniques, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The methodology aims to uncover how derogatory Dholuo expressions function as speech acts and implicatures that shape societal perceptions of the female gender, moderated by age, education, and religious beliefs.

3.2 Research design

This study adopts a qualitative research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design enables in depth collection and analysis of data.Ngigi, wakahiu and Karanja (2016) added that qualitatve research aims for an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons governing such behaviour. It is ideal for this study because: Qualitative data uncover deep meanings and context as it investigates why and how which creates room for more diversity in response and the capacity to adapt to new issues during the research process hence allowing exploration of implicit gender ideologies embedded in Dholuo expressions.

This study is based on , qualitative approaches, which is beneficial for this study since it creates room for in-depth, contextual understanding of complex social phenomena, it allows much flexibility in data collection and adaptation to evolving research questions, besides enabling the discovery of new patterns and perspectives in natural settings. It incorporates the benefits of both thematic and content data analysis (Selvam, 2017).

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Dholuo-speaking county in Kenya precisely in Siaya. This area is rich in traditional linguistic and cultural expressions, making it ideal for examining how language reflects and reinforces gender conceptualisation. This area was selected due to it rich linguistic and cultural heritage, which provides a fertile ground for examining gender-related language use. The choice of this region also ensures access to a diverse population of native Dholuo speakers, facilitating a rich data collection process (Ochieng, 2021).

3.3 Target population

The target population comprised Dholuo-speaking adults aged 18 years and above, including:

Elders and cultural custodians, Youth and students, Teachers and clergy, Men and women from various religious and educational backgrounds. This population was selected because they regularly use, interpret, and transmit cultural and linguistic content that may contain derogatory gender expressions. The target population for this study is drawn from Siaya County in western Kenya, a region predominantly inhabited by the Luo ethnic group. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Siaya County had a population of 993,183, up from 842,304 in 2009. Projections estimated the population would reach approximately 1,059,458 by 2023, reflecting a steady demographic growth (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). This population is socio-linguistically rich and provides a fertile ground for examining the conceptualization of the female gender within the Dholuo language.

The study specifically targeted adult and youth populations, including both males and females, who are either native speakers or fluent users of Dholuo. The participants included elderly men and women (aged 60 and above) and younger adults (aged 18–35) to ensure intergenerational

perspectives on the use and interpretation of gendered derogatory language in Dholuo. The selection of both male and female participants was designed to capture gendered perceptions and usage across demographic lines. Additionally, the population was chosen for its linguistic authenticity, as most residents use Dholuo as their primary or co-primary language. This diverse linguistic and generational representation was crucial in generating insights into how derogatory language toward the female gender is constructed, perceived, and transmitted within Luo society.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sample size for this study consisted of one hundred (100) participants. This number is considered sufficient for qualitative data collection within the constraints of time, logistics, and available resources. The sample were equally distributed between 50 males and 50 females to allow for balanced gender representation and comparative analysis across sex-based perceptions of derogatory language use in the Dholuo context. According to Ogula (2005) and Orodho (2002), a sample size of 100 is adequate for studies of this nature when purposive and stratified random sampling strategies are employed effectively. Pattern (2002), also noted that the appropriateness of sample size in a qulitative research is determined by the depth and richness of the data but not the number of participants hence a sample of 100 is huge enough to achieve the required thematic saturation. To ensure representation across relevant demographic groups, stratified random sampling was employed. The population was first divided into meaningful strata based on age (youth vs. elderly) and gender (male vs. female). This yielded four strata: (1) elderly males, (2) elderly females, (3) young males, and (4) young females. From each of these subgroups, participants were randomly selected using a simple lottery method, ensuring that each individual within a stratum had an equal chance of selection. This approach allowed for intergenerational and gender-sensitive comparisons of language use and perception.

Furthermore, iteration and saturation techniques were employed to refine the data collection process. Iteration ensured continuous data assessment during collection, allowing for real-time refinement of participant selection and question framing. Saturation was used as a guiding principle, meaning that data collection continued until no new themes or insights were emerging from participants within each stratum (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). This combined approach enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings by ensuring that participants were both demographically representative and thematically informative.

3.4.1 Sampling Procedure

This study employed stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across gender, age, and regional backgrounds within the Dholuo-speaking population. The target population consisted of both elderly and young male and female participants from Luo-speaking communities in Siaya, Stratification was based on three key variables: gender (male/female), age (youth aged 18–35 and elders aged 36+), and location (urban and rural areas). This approach was essential in capturing the generational and contextual variations in the use and perception of derogatory language against women in Dholuo.

From the estimated population of 100 participants, the researcher divided them into four strata:

1. Elderly men (25),
2. Elderly women (25),
3. Young men (25), and
4. Young women (25).

Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected using a lottery method, allowing each eligible individual an equal chance of selection. This ensured both representativeness and credibility of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The stratified design was also informed by the socio-linguistic differences in how gendered language is conceptualized and used among different demographic groups in the Luo community.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instruments used in this study included:

1. Semi-structured interviews – These were conducted with selected individuals across the four strata. The interviews explored participants' perceptions, usage, and interpretations of derogatory terms used to describe women in Dholuo, including their socio-cultural and contextual meanings. This instrument allowed for depth and flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on complex and context-sensitive issues (Patton, 2015).

2. Semi structured guide containing open-ended questions was used for Focus group discussions (FGDs) – Four FGDs, each representing one stratum, were conducted to gather group-level insights and consensus on commonly used derogatory expressions and their implications. Group interactions encouraged the emergence of shared meanings and collective memories around the use of derogatory language.

3. Audio recordings – With consent, conversations in informal social settings (e.g., markets, public gatherings, or household interactions) were recorded to capture natural language use. This helped validate whether the terms reported in interviews and FGDs were also used in daily communication.

4. Observation checklists – These were used to note non-verbal cues, contextual nuances, and gender dynamics during conversations involving derogatory language. The checklist focused on speaker gender, tone, audience, setting, and reactions.

3.5.1 Pilot Testing of the Instruments

A pilot study was conducted in Nyando sub-county in Kisumu County involving 8 participants (2 from each stratum) to pre-test the clarity, relevance, and cultural sensitivity of the interview guide and FGD prompts. Feedback from the pilot phase led to the rewording of ambiguous questions and the addition of new prompts to address overlooked issues such as contextual usage in marriage and proverbs.

Moreover, the pilot helped determine the average duration of interviews (approximately 45 minutes) and FGDs (60–75 minutes), which informed planning for the main data collection phase. It also tested the suitability of audio recording in informal settings and refined the observation checklist.

3.5.2 Validity of the Instruments

To ensure content and construct validity, the interview guides and FGD protocols were developed in consultation with experts in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, gender studies, and Dholuo language and culture. This expert review ensured that the instruments accurately captured the core constructs of "derogation," "conceptualisation," and "gender."

Triangulation of data sources interviews, FGDs, observations, and naturalistic recordings, further enhanced validity by corroborating findings across different methods (Flick, 2018). Additionally, the inclusion of both male and female participants across age groups ensured diverse perspectives on derogatory expressions and their implications for gender construction.

Face validity was confirmed through preliminary feedback from pilot participants, who found the questions relevant and reflective of real-life language practices. Finally, validity was also enhanced by translating the instruments into Dholuo and back-translating into English to ensure semantic equivalence.

3.5.3 Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure reliability, the researcher followed consistent procedures across all data collection sessions. The interview and FGD guides were standardized, and facilitators received training on question delivery, probing techniques, and note-taking to reduce interviewer bias.

The same observation checklist was used throughout the study, and a second observer was used in selected settings to conduct inter-rater reliability checks, which yielded a 90% agreement rate, indicating high reliability. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher and cross-verified with native speakers to confirm accuracy in translation and interpretation of derogatory terms. In addition, the researcher maintained a research journal to document field decisions, reflections, and deviations from the protocol, thereby supporting auditability and dependability of the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Ethical clearance was obtained from an accredited Institutional Review Board. Research assistants fluent in Dholuo were trained on data collection protocols, A pilot study (n=10) tested clarity and cultural sensitivity of the instruments, Participants provided informed consent before participating. FGDs and interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participants from the target population. The study area was divided into strata based on gender and age groups, and participants

were randomly selected from each stratum. This approach ensures that the sample is representative of the population and minimizes bias in the selection process (Bryman, 2016).

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006)

Data coded using NVivo software into themes such as:

Speech acts of exclusion or control

Implicatures implying inferiority

Resistance or reinterpretation of expressions

Data from FGDs, interviews, and content analysis were triangulated to enhance validity.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics establishes standards for behavior, distinguishing between right and wrong (APA, 2017). Securing consent in this study involved addressing ethical concerns by being transparent with participants about confidentiality limitations, data usage, and material handling. To avoid causing harm to any participant, the researcher was mindful of the various roles currently held. These roles consist of being a student, counsellor-in-training, and researcher.

To maintain ethical standards, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study after the research proposal received approval. Authorization was sought from the National Commission for Science and Technology (NACOSTI), the CUEA University Research Ethics Committee (CUEA), Siaya County area chief, and the Rarieda sub- County Director of Education, as well as the universities where the study took place. Following receipt of authorization from the appropriate

authorities, the researcher sought participants' informed consent and understanding of the potential benefits and risks of participation.

Before the distribution of the semi-structured questions, a briefing session took place that provided participants with an overview of the study. This included an explanation of informed consent, including voluntary participation, compensation, and withdrawal from the study. The debriefing session covered the purpose of the study and potential benefits, including interacting with the questionnaires, which served as an education tool for participants on the components of Language of Derogation Analysis and engagement with thought-provoking questions about the search for or presence of Conceptualisation of Female Gender in Dholuo.

The researcher did not collect the participants' names to ensure their anonymity and privacy. To monitor their responses, the researcher used a unique code for each participant and group. To ensure the highest level of data security, the researcher diligently safeguarded the semi-structured questions by storing them in a securely sealed bag and keeping them in a locked drawer during and after data analysis. This meticulous approach significantly reduced the potential for unauthorized access or disclosure. The researcher checked the study for misrepresentation and plagiarism.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the study's research methodology, a qualitative strategy to analyze how Dholuo expressions contribute to gender conceptualisation. The research design, sampling strategy, instruments, data analysis techniques, and ethical measures were aligned with the speech act and implicature theories underpinning the study. The next chapter presents the findings and analysis drawn from both strands of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATIONS, AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on "Language of Derogation: Analysis of Conceptualizations of Female Gender in Dholuo in Kenya." The findings are aligned with the specific objectives stated in Chapter One, namely: (1) to analyse categories of derogatory expressions used to refer to women in Dholuo, (2) to analyse the underlying conceptual metaphors and cultural contexts that inform these expressions, and (3) to evaluate the impact of such linguistic expressions on gender perception among Dholuo speakers. The results were derived from qualitative data sources.

4.2 Objective 1: Identifying and Categorizing Derogatory Expressions in Dholuo

Table 1 Identifying and Categorizing Derogatory Expressions in Dholuo

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	47	51.1
Agree	35	38.0
Undecided	3	3.3
Disagree	4	4.3
Strongly Disagree	3	3.3
Total	92	100.0

Qualitative data showed that 82% of respondents agreed that men frequently use derogatory language targeting women. This table therefore, implies that during speech in Dholuo, some derogatory words are used .Most of these words are commonly used in social gathering or in serious occasions like traditional weddings to warn or shape a behavior of an individual in a society. Both men, women and elderly and young refers to these derogatory forms in a

conversation; however, the researcher found that men use these expressions more often than women do.

With expressions such as "nyako mar piny" (a loose village girl), "dhako ma onge gi chike" (a woman without rules), “Nyar orudo’’ (a local woman), and “nyar agweng” (local woman), “nyar pap” (a prostitute) “Nyar dak” (maintains a home) Nyar pinje(belongs to different villages) “gele” (quarrelsome) “Koth woun chiemo” (the owner/ provider of food) “Min piny/ min ji” (a mother to the world and people) commonly cited. These expressions were qualitatively categorized under four major thematic domains: sexual immorality, economic dependence, domestic failure, and sex stigma.

To depict women as sexually immoral, terms like ‘Nyako ma wang’e tar’ (prostitute), "oodho" (prostitute), and "nyako ma ok jaratiro" (immoral girl) nyar pap (immoral woman) “nyar agweng” (cheap woman) “Nyako mar piny”(a loose village girl), “nyar por” (a woman who leaves her home to get other men in town) were used. These terms reflect control over female sexuality and stigmatize perceived sexual independence. These findings are in line with Adegbite and Moyo (2021), who identified common Hausa expressions such as karuwa (prostitute) and banza (useless woman), used to control and stigmatize female agency. On the same note Cameron (2020) highlights how in English and other Indo-European languages, gendered slurs like “slut” or “bitch” objectify and devalue women. However, despite the use of these sexually immoral terms to portray women as sexually immoral in society, these expressions are also used in the Luo community to tame and control some behaviors that society terms as taboos. Hence, these expressions, when used in songs and says, serve as a warning towards unwanted behavior or conduct.

However, using Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature (1991) in interpreting the above Dholuo statements used to refer to women, there is more than the literal meaning, and the hidden meaning is revealed. For example, "Dhako koth wuon chiemo'' the literal meaning (a woman is compared to rain, the source of food) implies that a woman owns food that satisfies men's sexual pleasure any time. This meaning is deeper than what is literally said, hence this flouts the maxim of manner by dehumanizing women and portraying them as immoral and promiscuous. Additionally, these utterances in Dholuo, according to speech act theory, ('oodho, thako ma wang'e tar, nyar pap") convey information but also perform the actions of stigmatization and portraying women as sexually immoral is perlocutionary. Therefore, the derogatory terms above are not only used to shape the behaviour, but they are performative acts that portray women as sexually immoral.

Economic dependence phrases such as "dhako onge pesa'' and "dhako ma onge gi pesa" (woman without money) imply that women are financial burdens, reducing their perceived societal value "Pesa dhako tin" (woman has no money). "Dichuo bengi dhako" (a man is a woman's bank), "pesa ema dago dhako ka pesa orumo to olal" "pesa twe dhako e dak" (money makes a woman stay forever in marriage) "Dhako rango ofuko dichuo ka okwot to odak ka opadre to odar'' (a woman only lives with a man when he is rich, when he gets poor, she leaves).

- **Locutionary**: women depend on men.
- **Illocutionary**: The speaker intends to **portray that** women conform to domestic and submissive ideals when a man is rich. (pesa twe dhako e dak).

- **Perlocutionary**: The audience may internalize this metaphorical expression as a cultural norm, shaping expectations and reinforcing the idea that women solely depend on men and do not maintain a home in case the husband becomes poor.

Over time, repeated use of such metaphors makes them **performative**; they not only describe reality but also **create** and **maintain** it. While some metaphors may seem to praise or describe men's responsibility (*"Dichuo bengi dhako"*), they often carry **implicatures** that reduce women to economic assets and dependents. Others, such as *"Dhako dak ka dichuo nigi pesa"*, use metaphor and indirect speech to reinforce traditional gender roles without overtly stating them. These metaphors function as **indirect speech acts** that both reflect and perform cultural expectations, subtly influencing societal norms about femininity and domesticity.

However, on some occasions, especially when applied by old women towards their daughters or in-laws, they are meant to make women work hard and be independent to avoid being intimidated by men. Nevertheless, the frequent use of these phrases by their male counterparts hurts women, lowers their self-esteem, and portrays them as financially dependent. Similarly, Ndung'u (2019) states that derogatory terms in Luhya, Kalenjin, and Maasai languages carry themes of female inadequacy, laziness, or over-dependence. However, the derogatory terms in Dholuo are often used in a conversation and, in turn, shape the perception and the conceptualization of gender in the Luo community. Additionally, interpreting the derogatory Dholuo language through speech act theory and implicature, the intended meaning of the speaker is explicit. Widening the understanding and the role of language in sharpening the societal norms and customs.

To portray women as domestic failures, expressions like "min keko, lelo, akoko" (quarrelsome wife) and "dhako ma oketo chiemo e lweny" (one who stirs food in war), nyar bayo (unsettled woman), dhako ma onge chike, (a woman without rule) "Dhako marito dala otamo"

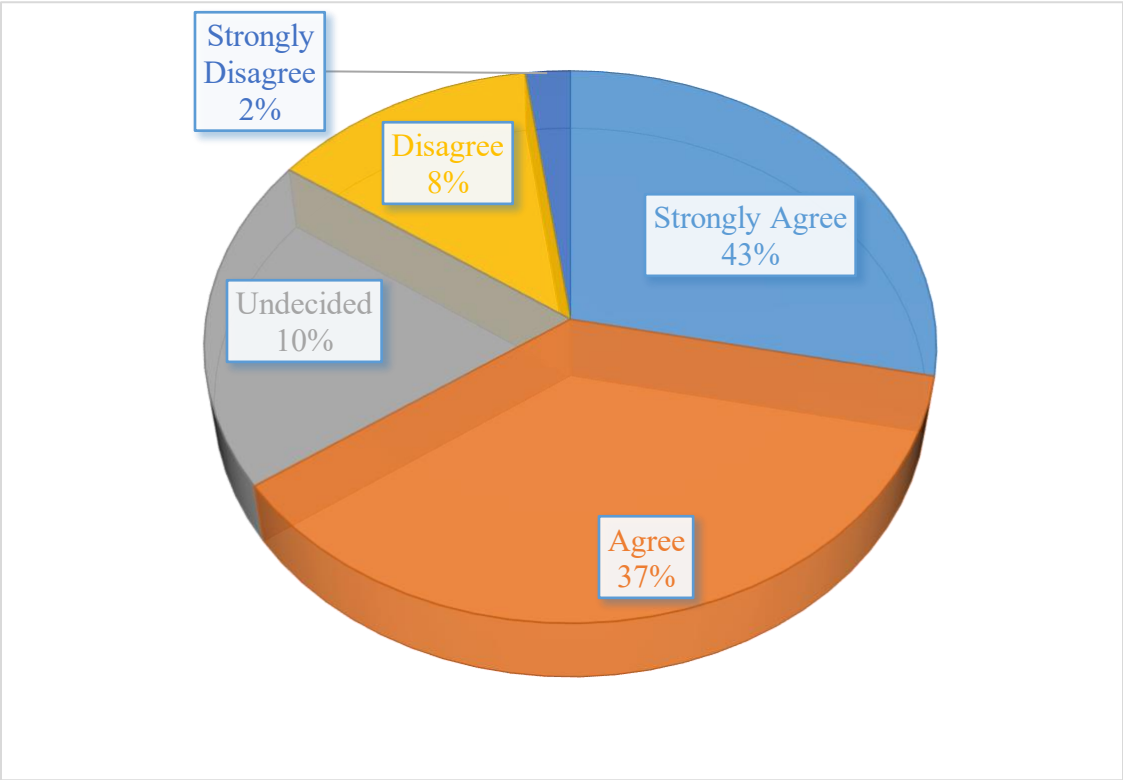
“Dhako ma ojwang’o dalane/ chwore” (a woman who has rejected her home and her husband), “Nyar mifuadhi” “Nya nyau gi kwecho” (lazy and begging for food) were employed. They suggest that women are incapable of maintaining peace and order at home. These terms also depict moral deficiency, and when women are labeled with these terms, they imply a lack of virtue, wisdom, or emotional control, and reinforce patriarchal moral standards (perlocutionary act).

These four categories resonate with the works of Owiti (2021) and Otieno & Achieng (2023), who highlighted how everyday Dholuo speech reflects rigid gender roles and sociocultural expectations. According to Austin’s Speech Act Theory (1962), such utterances are not merely descriptive but perform illocutionary acts—they serve as tools for reinforcing societal norms and expectations about gender. Even though at times these Dholuo expressions are used on women to make them work hard and take their roles and responsibilities seriously, and to warn against some undesired behavior in society, for the most part, they are used to castigate women, rendering them weak and marginalized. Besides, these phrases are used more frequently by men to maintain the societal patriarchal status. Additionally, the derogatory phrases used violate cooperative principles, flout the maxims of quality, quantity, and manner, resulting in perpetuated bias and violence against the marginalized.

In summary, the derogatory labels or expressions that are used on women are performative, in which they shape the societal norms, contributes to the stereotypes that are used on women and shape how women are perceived in the society. They also define explicitly the gender role and how in turn the women are looked at in line of performing and managing their homes.

4.3 Objective 2: Analysing Conceptual Metaphors and Cultural Contexts

Figure 2 Conceptual metaphors and cultural Context



The study found strong evidence that Dholuo employs culturally embedded conceptual metaphors that reinforce gender bias. For example, 80% of participants confirmed that women are often likened to objects or animals, This is depicted by 43% holding strongly that the conceptual metaphors that reinforces gender bias has impact on women and 37% also being in agreement with the statement. However, 10% were not able to decide, and 10% conceptual metaphors has nothing to do with the gender bias. However, this table still holds that the use of the conceptual metaphors that compare women to objects or material things highly devalues women's dignity, rendering them inferior in society as compared to Men.

. Phrases such as "dhako nyar bet" (woman of the house) and "nyako ma ok nyal bedo dhiang'" (a girl not worth a cow) metaphorically reduce women to domestic commodities or objects of trade. 'Dhako mwandu'(a woman is wealth) dhako kendo' (a woman is linked to kitchen and

cooking), ‘dhako kwer pur’’ These metaphors conform with Lakoff and Johnson’s (2003) conceptual metaphors like "WOMAN IS COMMODITY" and "WOMAN IS OBJECT," which frame women in terms of possession, utility, and dependence. These findings are further supported by Awuor and Odhiambo (2023), who noted the normalization of such metaphors through oral traditions and communal rites.

A commonly used Dholuo metaphor, *“Dhako mwandu”* (a woman is wealth), exemplifies the conceptual metaphor **A WOMAN IS AN ECONOMIC ASSET**. This metaphor appears to uphold the value of women by equating them with wealth. Similarly, *“Dhako malong’o en dhiang’”* (a good woman is a cow) complements this economic lens framing, maintaining that a well-behaved, honored, and respectable woman brings an essential dowry and, more profoundly, uplifts her family status in terms of respect. Within the cultural context, these metaphors reflect the role of marriage as a transaction where a woman’s worth is perceived in the way she contributes to the social, familial wealth, and how she maintains the social standard.

However, when these metaphors are evaluated more critically, an underlying objectification is revealed. This pervasively reduces women to a perceived economic and reproductive utility within a patriarchal system. Rather than being celebrated as autonomous individuals, women are framed as commodities exchanged through marriage, reinforcing gender inequality. This diverge from Awuor and Odhiambo (2023), who noted the normalization of such metaphors through oral traditions and communal rites. Since when metaphors are analyzed and interpreted through the Grice and Austin’s speech act theory, the speakers intended meaning is explicit thus they do not only maintains communal rites, but also shapes the marginalized perception and behavior in the society. In addition, the gender roles in the society are shaped and

reinforced through these conceptual metaphors, and as a result women and the marginalized are stigmatized.

More explicitly, metaphors such as *"Dhako oluth kuon, kendo, dhiang'"* (a woman is a cooking stick, hearth, or cow) employ the conceptual metaphor **A WOMAN IS A DOMESTIC OBJECT OR ANIMAL**. These expressions situate women firmly within domestic and reproductive roles. By equating women with kitchen tools or livestock, the language strips them of agency and identity, reflecting a cultural norm that confines women to household duties and positions of subservience. These metaphors naturalize gender roles, making them appear inherent or biologically determined rather than socially constructed.

Such metaphors, therefore, are not merely figurative language; however, they act as societal or cultural norms to shape how women are viewed, perceived, treated, and expected to conduct themselves or behave in a manner that society accepts. However, the use of this derogatory Dholuo metaphoric language not only influences social expectations but also reduces women's role to domestic spaces and reinforces their dependence on male authority.

The expressions *"Dhako mwandu"* (a woman is wealth), 'dhako malong'o en dhiang' (a woman is a dowry) can show compliment or praise, in alignment with the maxim of **quality** (speaks the truth). However, these expressions imply different meanings in a cultural context; the implicature is that a woman's worth is economic. The speaker may not clearly say that a woman is to be married off for dowry, but that is what is implied. Besides, this flouts the maxim of relation, as it seems to be more of a praise but it is actually about commodity.

Similarly, the metaphor *"Dhako oluth kuon"* (a woman is a cooking stick) carries implied assumptions about gender roles. The implicature is that the woman's primary domestic role of cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children, and serving suggests that a woman's primary

function is domestic—cooking, cleaning d serving. Although not explicitly stated, the utterance reinforces gender norms by implying that deviation from these roles is unnatural or unacceptable. Such implicatures, often unchallenged in everyday speech, subtly uphold patriarchal expectations. *"Dhako malong'o en dhiang'"* (a good woman is a cow), can be analysed using speech act theory as developed by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1969) in three levels:

- **Locutionary**: The literal claim equates a good woman with a cow.
- **Illocutionary**: The speaker intends to **praise** women who conform to domestic and submissive ideals.
- **Perlocutionary**: The audience may internalize this metaphor as a cultural norm, shaping expectations and reinforcing the idea that women are valuable only when they behave "properly."

Over time, repeated use of such metaphors makes them **performative**; they not only describe reality but also **create** and **maintain** it. While some metaphors may seem to praise or honor women (*"Dhako mwandu"*), they often carry **implicatures** that reduce women to economic assets. Others, such as *"Dhako oluth kuon"*, use metaphor and indirect speech to reinforce traditional gender roles without overtly stating them. These metaphors function as **indirect speech acts** that both reflect and perform cultural expectations, subtly influencing societal norms about femininity and domesticity.

Additionally, Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature (1991) was instrumental in interpreting how seemingly benign statements carried hidden derogatory meanings. For instance, "nyako ma odoko gi nyathi mang'eny" (a woman with many children) may appear neutral, but in context, it implies moral looseness or lack of self-control. These findings validate Grice's assertion that meaning often lies in what is culturally implied rather than explicitly stated.

4.4 Objective 3: Evaluating the Impact on Gender Perception

The study's findings revealed that derogatory language significantly affects how women are perceived and how they perceive themselves. Key statistics included: 54.3% of respondents strongly agreed that derogatory language enhances prejudice. 50% believed such language devalues women's dignity. 80% acknowledged that it leads to the marginalization of women. 42.4% confirmed that language promotes a rigid social hierarchy privileging men.

Furthermore, 31.5% strongly agreed and 55.4% agreed that offensive slurs are used against those considered of low status, primarily women. Many respondents noted emotional and psychological effects, including feelings of social exclusion and diminished self-worth. These outcomes strongly support Cameron (2020) and Holmes and Schnurr (2020), who describe language as a mechanism of gendered social control. In the Dholuo context, women internalize societal messages that they are inferior or secondary, which negatively influences their access to leadership, education, and personal agency. This supports Bar-Tal and Hammack's (2012) theory that language is a tool of delegitimization used to maintain unequal power structures.

However, the use of derogatory slur on men also indicate deep gender perception that reinforce traditional role and perception. "Dichuo ma nya dhako'' (a man with a woman's characteristic) is a slur used to criticize men who are perceived as weak and does not portray expected masculine behavior. Speech act theory, this slur 'dichuo manya dhako', has a perlocutionary act of portraying a man as weak, effeminate, may not be incapable protecting his family. On the same note, 'dhako' (woman) carries a negative connotation that one is inferior, and has a weak character, implying the notion that women must be protected. Therefore, the derogatory slurs in Dholuo not only hurt women. As such, these slurs, when applied to men, serve not only to

demean women indirectly but also to intimidate men by equating them with perceived feminine weaknesses. The result is a reinforcement of gender stereotypes and a broader social devaluation of anyone associated with the terms. Therefore, these slurs have a deeply negative impact on individuals regardless of gender, shaping behavior through intimidation and social stigma.

Education, age, and religious belief emerged as moderating factors. Educated respondents and those with strong religious teachings were less likely to endorse or perpetuate derogatory language, pointing to potential areas for linguistic and cultural intervention. Uneducated or semi-literate respondents did not consider the terms derogatory. Instead, they appeared to defend terms associated with women as culturally instigated. Young respondents, between 18 and 29, were particularly uncomfortable with the usage of these terms. They regarded those who use them as conservative and retrogressive.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings in alignment with the study's objectives and theoretical underpinnings. It confirms that Dholuo language comprises a repertoire of derogatory expressions that contribute to the marginalization and negative conceptualization of women. These expressions are reinforced by cultural metaphors and speech acts, shaping perceptions and social realities. The findings provide a foundation for the following chapter's discussion and recommendations for linguistic reform and gender-sensitive intervention.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses the study's findings in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It demonstrates how the data support or expand existing theoretical frameworks and empirical research. The discussion is organized around the three core research objectives, with integration of Speech Act Theory, Conversational Implicature, and the Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

5.2 Derogatory Expressions and Their Categorization

Language, as a vital tool for human communication, serves different purposes of conveying information, expressing attitudes, shaping perceptions, and influencing social interactions. Language operates within specific cultural and contextual frameworks that give meaning to the words and expressions used. Hence, certain expressions within this framework carry derogatory connotations that often reinforce stereotypes, perpetuate discrimination, or marginalize particular groups. Understanding how such language functions and how it is categorized, is essential to unpacking the social and psychological impact of communication in both personal and societal contexts. This chapter explores the nature of derogatory expressions, how they are classified, and the underlying mechanisms that contribute to their meaning, interpretation, and effect.

5.2.1 Derogatory Expressions and Their Categorization

The study revealed that 89% of respondents agreed that derogatory language is frequently used by men to describe women in Dholuo-speaking communities. Common expressions included "ja kwer" (prostitute), "min lelo" (quarrelsome woman), and "nyako mar piny" (loose village girl). These findings mirror those of Owiti (2021) and Otieno and Achieng (2023), who categorized such

expressions in similar cultural contexts as instruments of gender-based control and moral judgment.

These results align with Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, which posits that utterances are performative acts capable of shaping social behavior. Derogatory speech acts function as illocutionary tools used to prescribe and reinforce gender roles. According to Searle (1969), such acts fall under directives and expressives, functioning to express societal disapproval and demand behavioral conformity. While this study recorded a near 90% recognition rate of derogatory expressions among participants, Adegbite and Moyo (2021), in their Hausa language study, reported a slightly lower recognition rate at 77%, suggesting regional differences in the normalization of such language. This difference may stem from varying levels of exposure to civic education and feminist discourses across linguistic communities.

5.2.2 Conceptual Metaphors and Cultural Framing

Findings demonstrated that 80% of participants agreed that women are often metaphorically compared to objects or animals, such as cows, dogs, or tools. These metaphors contribute to a conceptual framing of women as subordinate or commoditized beings. This supports Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that linguistic metaphors shape how people think and act in everyday life.

The metaphor "WOMAN IS COMMODITY" was frequently encountered, especially in references to dowry-based expressions like "nyako ma ok nyal bedo gi dhiang'" (a girl not worth a cow). This finding aligns with the studies of Awuor and Odhiambo (2023), who identified similar metaphors in marriage negotiations among Dholuo speakers. Similarly, Eze and Okonkwo (2021) identified the metaphor "WOMAN IS FIRE" in Igbo culture, used to connote unpredictability and

danger. While Eze and Okonkwo (2021) found a gendered metaphorical framing rate of 67%, the current study reports a higher agreement rate (80%). This may reflect differences in data collection methods or cultural rigidity in metaphorical framing across communities.

Grice's (1991) theory of conversational implicature further explains how seemingly neutral expressions in Dholuo carry implicit derogatory meanings. For instance, phrases like "nyako ma odoko gi nyathi mang'eny" (a woman with many children) may suggest promiscuity or irresponsibility depending on context. This indirect derogation parallels findings by Holmes and Schnurr (2020), who showed that covert sexist language in professional settings has the same marginalizing effect as overt slurs.

5.2.3 Impact of Derogatory Language on Gender Perception

The impact of derogatory language on gender perception was substantial. For example:

- 54.3% of participants strongly agreed that derogatory language enhances prejudice.

- 50% agreed that it devalues women's dignity.

- 80% confirmed that it marginalizes women socially.

- 42.4% acknowledged that it promotes male-dominated social hierarchies.

These findings are consistent with Cameron (2020), who argues that sexist language constructs and perpetuates gender hierarchies. Similar studies by Chisale (2022) and Holmes and Marra (2019) found that linguistic marginalization influences women's participation in education, leadership, and employment. While Holmes and Marra (2019) reported a 60% perceived impact rate of sexist language on women's social participation in workplace settings, this study found a

higher impact rate (80%), likely due to the cultural centrality of language in traditional Dholuo communities.

Bar-Tal and Hammack (2012) describe language as a tool of delegitimization, a concept supported by the findings of this study. Women are delegitimized through linguistic expressions that frame them as emotionally unstable, intellectually inferior, or socially burdensome. This marginalization is reinforced through socialization, particularly among youth.

5.2.4 Moderating Variables: Education, Age, and Religion

This study identified that educational attainment and religious participation had a moderating effect on attitudes toward derogatory expressions. Participants with higher levels of education were more likely to reject derogatory expressions. Similarly, those with religious affiliations that emphasize gender equality expressed more progressive attitudes. These findings echo Morales et al. (2019), who found that education and religion serve as buffers against hate speech and gendered slurs. However, the study diverges slightly from Brown (2018), who found minimal moderating effects of religion in Western contexts, highlighting the cultural specificity of these variables.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that the Dholuo language encodes a wide range of derogatory expressions that contribute to the negative conceptualization of the female gender. These expressions function not only as descriptions but as social tools for enforcing gender roles, perpetuating stereotypes, and legitimizing inequality.

Findings align with Austin's Speech Act Theory and Grice's Theory of Implicature in demonstrating how language acts upon social realities. The use of conceptual metaphors such as "WOMAN IS COMMODITY" further affirms that linguistic patterns reflect deeper cultural ideologies. The study highlights the significant emotional, psychological, and social impacts of such language, and identifies moderating factors education, age, and religion that can influence perceptions.

5.4 Recommendations

1. ***Incorporate Gender-Sensitive Language Training:*** Linguistics curricula at all educational levels should include modules on gender-sensitive language use, especially in communities where indigenous languages dominate.

2. ***Promote Civic and Religious Dialogue:*** Civic education campaigns and religious teachings should incorporate messages against linguistic derogation and promote gender equity.

3. ***Policy Reform and Media Regulation:*** National language policies should include provisions that discourage sexist language in public discourse. Media outlets should adopt guidelines that prohibit the use of derogatory expressions.

4. ***Community-Based Sensitization Workshops:*** Engage elders, youth, and cultural custodians in workshops that raise awareness about the implications of derogatory language and promote alternative gender-inclusive expressions.

5. ***Further Research:*** Longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess changes in language use and gender perception over time. Future studies could also include adolescents and explore institutional impacts (e.g., legal, economic) of derogatory language.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings, highlighting both consistencies and variances with the existing literature. The findings affirm that language plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining gender inequality. By aligning the study with key linguistic theories and empirical research, the chapter underscores the urgent need for linguistic reform and gender-sensitivity intervention

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APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter

Greetings dear participant

I am Likung' Agnes, a Master's student in Applied Linguistics at CUEA Nairobi, Kenya. I am researching on Language of Derogation: Analysis of Conceptualizations of Female Gender in Dholuo in Kenya. The Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics this program includes this project as one of the requirements for graduation.

I respectfully request that you participate in this study by signing the informed consent form and responding to the questionnaire that is attached. This task will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Please give the questions some thought before you respond. Taking part in this study is voluntary. Any information submitted will be limited to the initially specified perimeter. You are not required to write down your name in the questionnaires as this will help keep your identity confidential, and you are free to stop participating in the activity at any time with no repercussions. The questionnaire is a self-administered tool, after filling in the details, kindly check to be sure you have attempted all the questions before you submit, once you complete, the researcher will immediately pass by to collect.

Please be aware that although your participation in this academic study adds to the body of knowledge already available, there will be no monetary reward for it.

Thank you for your cooperation.

With Regards

Likung' Agnes

APPENDIX B

Informed consent of participation

CUEA University
Name of Study: Language of Derogation: Analysis of Conceptualizations of Female Gender in Dholuo in Kenya.
• This research is being done as a requirement for the Applied Linguistics master's degree • The supervisors have given their approval. (Contact) • There is no known risk to study participants, and there is no deception. It takes roughly 10 to 15 minutes to participate in the study's current phase. • All respondents' identities are entirely protected. Each participant's results will only be published in aggregate form; they will not be presented separately. Your participation in this research is entirely optional; there is no monetary or other incentive to do so. All participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences, and all of their data will be destroyed.
Name of researcher: Likung' Agnes
Position of researcher: MA Student
Address of the University: CUEA University, 15055 – 00509, Lang'ata, Nairobi, Kenya.
Researcher's Signature:…….; Date: ……..
Statement to be signed by the participant: • I confirm that the researcher has explained fully the nature of the project and the range of activities which I will be asked to undertake and that I have received an information sheet. I confirm that I have had adequate opportunity to ask questions about this project. • I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time during the project, without having to give a reason • I agree to take part in this project, by filling in the questionnaire.
Signed by participant……..……. **Date**……

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

SECTION A: Demographic Characteristics

Please answer the following questions by ticking the boxes

1. **Age:** ☐ 2. **Education:** ☐

3. **Gender:** **Male** ☐
   Female ☐
4. Religion : ☐
5. ☐

SECTION B:

The following statements relate to expressions, beliefs, and social perceptions in the Dholuo language regarding women. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing the number that best reflects your opinion according to the following: **1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree, 5=Strongly disagree.**

	Identification and Categorization of Derogatory Expressions	**SA**	**A**	**UD**	**D**	**SD**
1	I am familiar with Dholuo sayings that describe or refer to women.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2	Most Dholuo sayings about women are derogatory.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3	Such sayings are still frequently used in daily conversations.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4	Men use gendered expressions more frequently than women.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5	There are different types of derogatory sayings based on emotions, intellect, and domestic roles.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Conceptual Metaphors and Cultural Context					
6	Dholuo expressions about women reflect cultural beliefs.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7	Women are often compared to animals or objects in Dholuo language	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8	These expressions stem from patriarchal cultural traditions.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
9	Such sayings are common during social events like ceremonies and songs.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
10	Dholuo sayings are used to justify gender inequality	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Impact on Gender Perception					
11	These sayings shape societal views about women.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
12	Gendered expressions make women feel less capable.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
13	Such sayings limit women's political and leadership potential	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
14	Educated people tend to reject these expressions.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

15	Religious teachings challenge sexist language.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
16	Younger people are more critical of these sayings than older people	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Attitudes Toward Reform and Change					
17	These sayings should be publicly challenged	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
18	Schools should address gendered language in the curriculum.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
19	Religious and local leaders should discourage such expressions	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
20	Campaigns for gender-sensitive language are necessary	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
21	Dholuo language can evolve to support gender equality	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Open-ended Questions					
22	Please provide examples of Dholuo sayings that you consider derogatory to women	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
23	In what ways do these expressions affect the roles or opportunities available to women?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
24	How do education and religion influence your view of such expressions?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
25	What changes would you suggest to promote gender-sensitive language in your community?					

Researcher, 2025.

APPENDIX D

Permits

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

AMECEA

30/07/24

To whom it may concern

RE: AGNES LIKUNG' – ADM. NO. 1039611

It is our pleasure to inform you that Agnes Likung' is a student in our department of Languages, Literature and Communication undertaking a Masters of Arts in Applied Linguistics. She defended her proposal entitled: **Language Of Derogation: Analysis of Conceptualizations of Female Gender in Dholuo in Kenya.** She is due to collect data and l therefore request that she is accorded the necessary assistance.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Rose Mavisi

HoD Languages,Literature and Communication

Catholic University of Eastern Africa

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA (CUEA) P.O. BOX 62157 00200 Nairobi – KENYA

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APPENDIX E

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