

Brief Communication

Probing Language and Patriarchy in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper focuses on the views of participants who were interviewed regarding codified meaning that is found in language. The paper addresses some of the arguments made by Feminist paradigms in de-constructing patriarchal hegemony that perpetuates itself in language and culture. The undergirding argument is that language can be used as a tool of oppression or liberation. The goal of this paper is to expose some of the de-humanizing aspects of language, and to foster a dialogue that aims at ending gender discrimination. The study used a qualitative research methodology to gather the viewpoints of the participants regarding some patriarchal epithets that may be found especially in Sepedi language largely spoken in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. Participants in this study were purposively sampled. The participants' observations are that language is the backbone of power relations in every society. It is through language that some patriarchal belief systems continue to be perpetuated even in our modern day communities. Participants are of the view that women are at the receiving end of these patriarchal tendencies. There has to be a paradigm shift in dealing with gender stereotypes that perpetuate male hegemony in our respective societies.