

A GENDER AND LANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF OMANI PROVERBS

By

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FTA	Face Threatening Act
SAT	Speech Act Theory
SVO	Subject-verb-object word-order.
VSO	Verb-subject-object word-order.

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Linguistic analysis of oral traditions has been carried out often from many angles. Proverbs are one of these traditions that have been the locus of sociolinguistic research. Gender representation has been frequently uncovered in proverbs of different cultures. However, a similar analysis has not yet targeted the Omani treasure of proverbs. This study examines proverbs from a linguistic perspective, and it represents them as speech acts. It also investigates Omani proverbs with feminine markers to expose the images of women as conveyed by these proverbs. This study also sets out to examine the status of negative proverbs about women in contemporary Omani society by conducting a distributional analysis of these proverbs.

The study is based on a collection of 63 proverbs with feminine markers acquired from written sources. Only 10 proverbs convey positive images about women; the remaining 53 depict negative images. A qualitative analysis of these proverbs is provided based on the sources' explanations of the proverbs and on the researcher's emic perspective. A distributional analysis of the negative proverbs is performed based on a questionnaire that was circulated to young Omani males and females. Subsequent interviews were conducted with older females and a young male.

The results derived from the questionnaire show that young Omanis do not recognize all the proverbs given to them, nor do they interpret them appropriately. The results also showed that many of the negative images reflected by these proverbs are not characteristics of women only; many men exhibit such characteristics. Furthermore, the belief that these negative images pertain to women in contemporary Omani society has diminished. The interviews support these findings.

The present study suggests an ongoing change on the status of the negative proverbs about women. The society has undergone a change since 1970s, when Oman's renaissance started as Sultan Qaboos bin Said became the ruler of the country and altered the status of women in the society. People now are ready to relinquish many of these proverbs. This study could inspire future research in the area of gender and language to examine gender representation in other literary forms.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This thesis sheds light on the images of women that are reflected by Omani proverbs. Proverbs are linguistic adages which are the product of societies' experiences and general observations. All societies, from Japan to Indonesia, Syria to Greece, France to South Africa, have proverbs as part of their languages, and speakers of the language bequeath them to their offspring through the generations. Although proverbs are born from past incidents and observations, they often persist and continue to exist for thousands of years after their creation. This fact makes proverbs a powerful oral tradition since they have potential to shape society. Different societies and cultures may share the same proverbs, or at least may express similar themes in different ways.

Proverbs can offer insight into how the society has evolved. They can also transmit information that does not pertain to a contemporary society. Although an observation that was true in the past may not continue to be true in the present, the existence of a proverb that relates to that particular observation perpetuates it and makes people take it for granted as a truth. Consider, for example, the English proverb a woman's place is in the home. This proverb has been used for hundreds of years. However, this proverb does not apply to women in the 21st century. Its only function nowadays could be to serve those who want to confine women to domestic duties. To make this saying be compatible with the situation of women in contemporary society, it is improved to: a woman's place is in the home... and the senate, which appears in bumper stickers.

Proverbs have been studied extensively. Many studies document the proverbs of societies around the world, many of which have tracked the origins and meanings of proverbs. Despite the fact that many studies deal with proverbs from sociolinguistic perspectives, none of them has

examined the use of proverbs in Omani society. This lack of research is not surprising given that Omani Arabic has rarely been a subject of sociolinguistic study.

This paper attempts to fill in some of those gaps. Another motivation for this study is the observation of the frequency of proverbs in the daily interactions of Omani people. Omani people enjoy using proverbs and try to make use of them whenever they can. This interest in proverbs is maintained by young people in Oman, especially by men. This necessitates studying this oral tradition to see how its values affect the society. However, such a task cannot be fulfilled by a single study or a general focus. This study will therefore focus on proverbs that relate to women and will try to uncover the relationship between such proverbs and the structure of the society. This paper attempts to answer the following three questions:

1. “How do Omani proverbs portray women?”
2. “Do young Omani women and men agree with such images?”
3. “What is the status of such proverbs in contemporary Omani society?”

The study will also provide a linguistic examination of Omani proverbs, and it will relate the proverbs to Speech Act Theory.

### **Oman**

The Kesra named Oman Mazun  
And Mazun, O friend! Is a goodly land  
A land abounding in fields and groves  
With pastures and unfailing springs

(Pre-Islamic poet)

Figure 1-1 illustrates the location of Oman. Bordered by Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, Oman is situated in the southeastern quarter of the Arabian Peninsula (Allen 1987:1). It claims a land area of about 309,500 km<sup>2</sup>, and a population of 2,509,000, including 666,000 expatriates (Oman tourism portal). The formal language in the country is Arabic.



Figure 1-1. Location of Oman. [ Reprinted with permission from NY Transfer's Maps. 2001. Arabian peninsula and vicinity, 1984. <http://www.blythe.org/afghan-maps/index.html>.]

Two types of Arabic exist: Modern Standard Arabic, which is used in writing and formal speaking, and dialectical Arabic, which is used in conversations. The colloquial variants of Arabic differ from country to country and also within a country. These variants are derived from classical Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran. Nomadic and pastoral ways of life triggered the existence of these dialects. The regional variants are learned as the speakers' mother tongue and used in day-to-day interactions. Standard Arabic is taught in schools and universities and used in offices, the media, and written works. People switch between using their local vernacular and standard Arabic, but the switch differs from person to person. The situation depends on the topic, a person's level of education, individual preference, and other factors (Holes 1995).

Different versions of Arabic are spoken in various regions of the Sultanate. Undeniably, similarities are shared between these versions, and the differences do not hinder understanding among interlocutors from various regions.

Prior to the discovery of oil in the area, the economy of the Omani society depended mostly on fishing, farming, agriculture, and craft-making (Allen 1987). Such practices helped shape the structure of the society and assigned different tasks to its two genders.

Common practices of societies and the organization and structure of societies constrain their languages. One of the major contributions of the beliefs borne by societies is proverbs.

## **Proverbs**

### **Definition**

Pages can be filled to try to define a proverb. This paper offers definitions mentioned in four sources. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Allen, Fowler and Fowler 1990: 962), a proverb is defined as: “A short pithy saying in general use, held to embody general truth”. Webster’s *New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Webster and Rogers 1953: 1172) defined a proverb as: “A short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience, adage or maxim.”

Another definition, from Jayakar’s *Omani Proverbs* (1987: 2), stated: “Proverbs are a key to a nation’s psychology, its political, religious and social ideals and such preoccupations as weather, neighbors and animals.” In his book, *Arabic Proverbs: An Analytical Historical Study*, Qatamish (1988: 11) defined a proverb as a brief saying that has a righteous meaning and by which a current incident is represented by a past incident.

The core idea of proverbs is that they are considered as wisdom, which can guide people in their social lives. This wisdom is not limited to a certain theme, but instead covers a wide range of themes, as the first definition shows.

## **Proverbs vs. Idioms**

An idiom is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Allen et.al 1990: 586) as: “A group of words established by use and having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words.” Webster’s *New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Webster and Rogers 1953: 721) defined an idiom as: “An accepted phrase, construction, or expression contrary to the usual patterns of the language or having a meaning different from the literal.”

Proverbs and idioms both have a commonality and possible non-compositional meaning. However, they differ in that proverbs are based on real life experiences and they state truth. Proverbs attempt to offer guidance in life, but idioms do not have that tendency. The English proverb people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones and the idiom to hit the sack, are excellent examples. Both expressions have a non-compositional meaning because they convey meanings that are not the sum of their individual words. The proverb means that a person should not criticize others when she/he has their same faults. The idiom means “to go to sleep.” Obviously, the purpose of the proverb is to give advice for use in real life. The idiom does not perform that function; no advice is implied in “hitting the sack.”

## **Value of Proverbs**

Proverbs are very important and valuable in every society. In *Proverb Lore*, Hulme (2007: 3) stated: “By means of . . . [Proverbs], primitive peoples entered upon a heritage of sound wisdom and good working common-sense, and had ready to hand counsels of prudence, hints for the conduct of life, warnings of its pitfalls.” That is, people can receive guidance from proverbs and they can know how to behave and how not to behave in most matters of life.

## The Place of Proverbs in Oman

For centuries, the inhabitants of Oman were isolated from other Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula due to the geographic nature of the country. Omanis retained; however, a great deal of the Arab culture; one of which is the statement of truths and thoughts in the form of proverbs. Whether in the market, the field, the fort, or at home, an Omani is prone to hear proverbs being used in daily conversations. Omanis are proud of their ability to use proverbs in appropriate situations (Jayakar 1987), and they can easily identify which proverb to use in a specific situation. The people use proverbs as facts that support their claims, and once they support their claims or views by a proverb, few counterattacks can succeed in contradicting them. Omanis also believe that proverbs offer sincere advice, and they try to abide by such advice, such as in the following proverb:

فتح بابك و تجمل و لا شده و تخمل

Open door.your (generic masculine) and be generous or close.you (generic masculine) it and get lazy.

One should either open her/his door widely to be generous, or she/he should close her/his door.

This proverb states that if people want to be generous and invite others, they should open their doors and have people come in. But if they cannot afford it, they should close their door and not invite anyone. In this way, they can get lazy and not bother by having to prepare their place and food for the guests.

Omanis take this as advice. If they cannot afford inviting people, they do not do it. On the other hand, if they want to invite people, they have to open their doors wide enough, that is, they should be able to afford food for all the people they invite.

Omanis enjoy hearing stories about their past and their flourishing present. They therefore continue using proverbs as a sign of loyalty to their past. They try to revive their heritage by encouraging scholars to produce research in the area. To preserve our heritage, his majesty

Sultan Qaboos bin Said founded the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture. One of the tasks of this ministry is revitalizing Omani arts and ancestral literary works. From this perspective, scholars researched Omani proverbs and they made effort to document, explain, and translate these proverbs.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown how proverbs represent gender. This subject matter has been of interest to researchers for some time in different societies and languages. Despite the differences between societies in which such studies have taken place, common themes emerge.

Inferiority, lack of intellectual and physical abilities, lack of leadership, having an ill-nature, and being trouble makers are some of the frequent images of women, as reflected by researched proverbs. Such studies include: Hussein's (2009) analysis of proverbs from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya; Kiyimba's (2005) examination of Baganda proverbs; Zhang's (2002) study of Chinese proverbs; Storm's (1992) investigation of Japanese proverbs; and Shivtiel's (1996) study of Yemeni proverbs.

Hussein (2009:102) reported the following proverbs that "nullify" women and stress their inferiority to men: "Women are big but not great" (an Ethiopian proverb) and "Women and an invalid man are the same thing" (a Kenyan proverb.) The second proverb denigrates a man who fails to keep up to the norms of masculinity by equating him to women, that is, this man is as useless as a woman.

Kiyimba (2005) offered many Baganda proverbs that reflect women's inferiority. This inferiority is reflected in proverbs which stress that a woman is considered inadequate if she delivers only girls: "She who gives birth to [only] girls, is not assured of a place in her husband's clan." On the other hand, a woman is idealized if she gives birth to boys: "One who will become a favorite begins by giving birth to a baby boy." This proverb means that a woman in a polygamous marriage can be her husband's favorite if she gives him a boy.

Kiyimba also presented proverbs that objectify women and introduce girls as social and material wealth. Examples of this type of proverb include: "He who produces beautiful ones will

be visited by big ones.” This proverb means that a family’s situation could change for the better if the family has a beautiful daughter, since she is likely to marry a wealthy man who would pay her family a lot for her.

Zhang (2002) provided some Chinese proverbs that reflect women’s low status in the Chinese community as: “Sons are a gold wall, daughters are a clay wall.” This proverb shows that families can depend on their sons because they will always be there for them, unlike daughters who leave their families once they get married. Zhang also reported that Chinese proverbs show that women are trouble-makers such as: “Once a daughter-in-law comes in, there is no peace in the household.”

Storm (1992) provided some Japanese proverbs that present women’s inferiority. These proverbs include: “Men are treated with respect, women are treated as inferior.” She also presented proverbs that referred to women’s lack of intellectual abilities: “There are no wise women”; lack of physical abilities: “Frailty, thy name is woman”; talkativeness: “Women talk about things senselessly”; and ill nature of women: “Women are devilish.”

Shivtiel (1996) presented Yemeni proverbs that convey positive and negative characteristics of women. However, negative attributes outnumber the positive ones. Shivtiel provided such themes as greed, extravagance, hypocrisy, chattiness, brainlessness, slothfulness, weakness, meddlesomeness, lying, unreliability, craftiness, trouble-making, and intrigue.

These cited studies reveal that nearly all societies in which proverbs have been studied regard women as inferior, and they stress that inferiority in their oral folklore. These proverbs not only portray women negatively, but they also perpetuate these negative images as they are transmitted from one generation to another.

The current study will scrutinize the Omani repertoire of proverbs. As in Hussein's (2009), Kiyimba's (2005), Zhang's (2002), Storm's (1992) and Shivtiel's (1996) studies, this study will explore the themes that are said to be characteristics of women, according to Omani proverbs. Unlike the other studies, this paper will review the proverbs' applicability to men. Although the previous studies provide fair explanations to the themes they present, they do not reveal whether or not the proverbs they offer can be used to refer to men in certain situations, and they do not attempt to explain such use.

The cited studies attempt to elucidate the emergence of negative images about women in the proverbs of the languages they deal with by referring to the hierarchical structure of the given societies. Although male dominance and power in society are key factors in spreading negative thoughts about women, it is not sufficient grounds to account for the amount of opposition between the reality of women and what is expressed about them in proverbs. In this study, explanations for the themes that emerge in Omani proverbs and for inapplicability of some of those proverbs to men will not be based only on the structure of the society and the hierarchy between the two genders. This study will also refer to the distinction between the roles of men and women in Omani society, as well as access to education.

A further task, which is overlooked by the other studies, is examining the present status of these proverbs and whether or not they continue to exist and to be used by Omanis given the changes in Omani society as a result of the country's renaissance.

### CHAPTER 3 LINGUISTIC REVIEW OF THE PROVERBS

In this chapter, I provide a linguistic examination for the proverbs to be investigated. This task will proceed by first examining the feminine markers. Looking over the configuration of the proverbs will follow. Finally, I will analyze the proverbs from the perspective of Speech Act Theory.

#### Feminine Markers

The interpretation that the discussed images, whether negative or positive, pertain to women comes from the observation that in all these proverbs there are feminine markers. In most of the cases, the marker is a morpheme which could be either the prefix /t-/ or one of the suffixes /-t/, /-h(a)/ or /-sh/. In few cases, there is a prefix and a suffix because Arabic allows for circumfixation. This marker is the most common one and it lends itself to both types of proverbs, negative and positive, as shown in examples 1-2.

1.

سارت تبكي صوت جتها عبر  
Sara-**t**    **t**-ubki    suut    jaat-**ha**    abrah  
Went-**she**    **she**-cry    a cry,    came-to-**her**    a tear  
She went only to cry, but she actually shed tears.

2.

بو تعاونت ما غلبت  
Bu    **t**-aawna-**t**    ma    gilba-**t**  
Who **she**-cooperated-**she**    not    defeated-**she**  
She who cooperated was not defeated.

Another marker of femininity is the use of lexemes that explicitly refer to women. Such words include: women (singular or plural), daughter, bride, pregnant (a noun in Arabic), and a confined woman (one word in Arabic). These words also appear in both types of proverbs, negative and positive. Examples 3-4 represent this marker.

3.

الحريم محرومات العقل

Al- **harem** mahruma-t al-aqil  
The-**women** denied the-brains

Women are denied brains.

4.

السبالة فعين أمها غزال.

Al-sabal-**h** f-ayen **umm-ha** gazelle  
The-monkey-she in-eye **mother-her** gazelle

In the eye of her mother, a monkey is a gazelle.

A final cue that a proverb is has a feminine reference is the use of feminine onomastics in negative proverbs only. Females' names are explicitly mentioned in some proverbs. Some of the names are: Marium-o, Mas'ooda, and Halima. The first name is denigrated by adding the suffix –o to, which is a tendency in dialectical Arabic especially that spoken in the Arab Gulf area. An example is given in 5.

5.

عادت حليلة لعائتها القديمة.

Aada-t **Halima** li-aadiat-**ha** l-qadeemaa  
Came back-she **Halima** to-habit-her the-old

Halima is back to her old habits.

### The Configuration of the Proverbs

When a person reads or hears these proverbs, she/he gets a feeling that there is an incident being reported. A thorough look at the construction of the proverbs reveals that they are mostly full sentences. They are either verb-subject- object (VSO) or subject-verb-object (SVO), the common types in Arabic. They are mostly in the past tense, but there are few in the present tense.

Example 6- 8 illustrate this.

6.

جالسه في الكله و حسها ورا الحله .

**Sitting-she** in the-group and sense-her behind the-area  
**Verb.present-Subject Object (VSO) Present**

She is sitting with everyone, but her mind is in another place

7.

راحت تطحن و عرست

**Went-she** grind and wedded-she  
**Verb.past-Subject Object (VSO) Past**

She went to grind wheat/Mill but she ended up getting married.

8.

الحرمة شاورها و خالفها .

**The-woman** consult-her and contradict-her  
**Subject Verb.present-Object Verb.present-Objec (SVO) present**

Consult a woman, but oppose her opinion

Another tendency that is observed is the stating proverbs as conditional statements.

Example 9 shows this.

9.

إذا طالت بارت

**If** stay longer-**she**, barren-she  
**Subordinator Verb-Subject Object**

If she stays longer, she is rendered barren.

What can be seen as perplexing though is having proverbs stated in the form of a simile. Many proverbs start with the word “like,” and this might raise doubts whether such forms are proverbs or not. However, these forms share many characteristics with proverbs and therefore should be treated as such. They are sayings that are descended in the past and moved from one generation to another, keeping their original form intact. They also serve to provide guidelines for life. This form is also widely used in proverbs with the generic masculine form. When a proverb is stated in this form, it gives a meaning of sarcasm and it is inferred that the person described by the proverb is being mocked. An example of such proverbs is given in 10.

10.

كما بلوشية غرقان زوجها .

**Like** Balushi-she drowned husband-her

Like a Balushi woman whose husband has drowned.

## Proverbs as Speech Acts

According to Speech Act Theory (SAT), which was developed by the philosophers John Austin and John Searle; “language is used to perform actions” (Schiffrin 1994: 49). This view proposes that by uttering words, a person performs actions. By using words in their right contexts, a person can assert, request, promise, thank, or declare ...etc (Schiffrin 1994).

The proverbs discussed can be viewed as performative speech acts. By saying a proverb, a person is performing an act. In fact, multiple acts can be performed by a single proverb. Defining proverbs as sayings that offer guidelines for life entails that a proverb serves to advise of doing a good behavior, or warn against undertaking a bad behavior. Example 8, repeated below, is an instance of two speech acts being performed by the same proverb.

8.

الحرمة شاورها و خالفها.

The-woman consult-her and contradict-her

Consult a woman, but oppose her opinion.

This proverb advises a man not to enact a woman’s opinion. At the same time, it warns him against the consequences of acting out a woman’s opinion.

A proverb can also function as a complaint against a bad behavior or characteristic of someone. Example 11 shows this.

11.

يوم ما عرفت تلعب قالت المعذب ضيق

When not knew-she she-play, said-she the-playground narrow

When she didn’t know how to play, she said that the play-ground was narrow.

A person could say the proverb in 11 to complain about someone’s tendency to blame others for her/his flaws.

Another act that can be performed by a proverb is scolding as shown in example 12.

12.

منش روحش تدوري الدق و لقيتي

Because of-you.fem yourself.fem you.fem-search for the-knock and found-you.fem

You yourself are the cause of the misfortune; you hunt after beating and have got it.

In 12, a person is blamed for causing troubles for himself/herself. She/he is being reprimanded for acting in a way that resulted in her/him being in troubles.

Condemning and criticizing a bad behavior or a negative attributes is one more function of a proverb. Example 13 illustrates this point.

13.

توكل مال الزوج و تحن للمطلق.

She-eats money the-husband and she-yearns to-the-divorced

She eats at the expense of the present husband, but yearns toward her ex-husband.

This proverb condemns ungratefulness. A woman is being honored by her husband, yet she feels nostalgic to her ex-husband. Despite her current husband's good treatment to her, she pays him back by thinking of someone else. This proverb states that this is a despicable attribute, and it denounces it.

An additional performance carried out by proverbs is complimenting. There are some positive proverbs, which are discussed in chapter 8, that compliment women for their good behavior and for having good qualities. 14 is an example of a compliment.

14.

بو فجيبيها يستر عيبيها

What in-pocket-her hide vice-her

What is in her pocket is enough for her and keeps her away from committing vices.

This proverb compliments women for being contented and abstinent. It also advises women to have qualities of contentment and self-discipline.

Knowing that a proverb is an act, or multiple acts, a person should be careful when using a proverb because a proverb, just like any other act, can be a face-threatening-act (FTA). The idea of “face” was first introduced by Ervin Goffman (Meyerhoff 2006: 84). He defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself. . . [during social interaction]” (Goffman 1999: 299). Brown and Levinson (1999: 312) elaborate on this notion and they describe “face” as “wants”. They distinguish between positive and negative face. Positive face is a person’s need to be liked, and negative face is a person’s need not to be imposed upon. Both types of face can be threatened. A positive-face is threatened when a speaker acts in a way that shows that he/she does not care about the addressee’s feelings and needs. A negative-face is violated by acts that avoid imposition on a person.

A proverb can be used in a way that renders it as an FTA. When a person is told a proverb that describes him/her as having a negative characteristics, then his/her positive face is violated. In other words, his/her need to feel liked is not fulfilled; on the contrary, he/she is criticized. Similarly, offering advice through the use of a proverb can be a threat to a person’s negative-face. Explicitly, giving advice can be taken as stepping on one’s personal matters. Example 9, repeated below, is an illustration of this:

9.

إذا طالت بارت

If stay longer-she, barren-she

If she stays longer, she is rendered barren.

In 9, aging in women is disdained. A woman is criticized for being of an age at which she is considered a spinster; thus, this proverb violates a woman’s positive face and is considered as an FTA. The proverb could also be used to warn a woman or a man against procrastination. Such

advice could be interpreted as intruding in one's life. In that sense, the proverb becomes an FTA since it violates the addressee's negative face.

The interpretation of proverbs as speech acts is valid for all proverbs; however, not all proverbs are FTAs. The situation differs from one speech event to another; human interactions are not the same. In some cases, using a proverb can be an effective strategy to attend to an interlocutor's positive or negative face. When a proverb compliments a person, it attends to the person's positive-face. Correspondingly, instead of making an explicit order, a proverb can be used to insinuate a suggestion, and that could be inferred as a technique to attend to a person's negative-face. Factors like the social distance between the interlocutors, and the context and topic of the conversation can have influence in the view of proverbs as FTAs.

Finally, it appears that several cues could be used to tell that a proverb represents women. Affixes, lexical choices and feminine onomastics are the main cues. A thorough scrutiny shows that proverbs could be configured in different word orders or they can even be in the form of a simile. Most importantly, a Speech Act analysis is applicable to proverbs and it reveals that proverbs can perform actions and they can be FTAs.

CHAPTER 4  
METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

**Data Collection**

A qualitative analysis of proverbs collected from written sources was performed. Two books on Omani proverbs are used:

1) *Omani Proverbs* (1987) by Jayaker, who was a doctor, political agent, and a traveler in Oman. He compiled an original collection of Omani proverbs and translated them into English.

2) *Oman's Sayings for All Times* (1986, 1987) by Omani scholar Khaleefah bin Abdullah Al-Humaidi. This book consists of two volumes, and it is one of the most highly acclaimed sources. Its author is one of the most respected scholars in Oman. Proverbs cited from this book are not translated into English. I offered my own translation relying on my native speaker's competence and my background in translation. I then provide an analysis, which will include an explanation for each proverb and the themes to which those proverbs refer. Explanations for the proverbs will be based on clarification from the above sources in addition to my own emic perspective. I point out when some proverbs apply to both genders and when they do not apply to men.

It is worth noting that most of the proverbs in the Omani repertoire are in generic masculine. Those proverbs express negative and positive attributes about a person, and they can be used to refer to a woman or a man. Examples of such proverbs include:

1.

مال عمك ما يهتمك

Money.of uncle-**your.masc** not bother-**you.masc**

You do not care about your uncle's money (and therefore you waste it).

This proverb has a generic masculine morpheme, yet it can apply to a man or a woman. It says that a person does not care about other's money or possessions; therefore, he/she wastes

them and uses them unwisely. On the other hand, when he/she uses her own money, he/she is very careful.

2.

بو يشور بعمره يكدن

Who **he**-offer **himself** **he**-receded

He who offers his advice without being asked, is not listened to.

This proverb is used to refer to a man or a woman who is offers advice or help without being asked for it. Such a person is usually ignored and nobody listens to him/her or cares about how he/she can help.

In the Omani repertoire, there are few proverbs that have a feminine marker. Some of the proverbs with feminine markers do not apply to men while others do apply to men. It is denigrating to a man when a proverb with a feminine marker is applied to him. Examples include:

3.

سايره تبني الذرا جاه البرد من ورا.

Went-**she** **she**-build the-protection, came-to-**her** the-cold from behind

She went to build protection or shelter (from before), but the cold came in from behind.

This proverb says that a person, a man or a woman, failed to do a task in a proper way. He/she wanted to build a shelter, but the outcome of her effort was imperfect.

4.

عورا تقود رمدان ه

Blind-**she** **she**-leads ophthalmic-**she**

The blind leading the blind.

In this proverb, a blind woman leads another one that is in less sever situation. This proverb is used to address a situation in which a non efficient person, a man or a woman, leads others who are not necessarily worse than him/her.

In the collection I had access to; most of the proverbs that have a feminine marker have negative meanings. I had 53 proverbs with negative themes and only 10 proverbs with positive connotations. Because the negative proverbs outnumber the positive ones, they are going to be the main focus of the qualitative analysis and the subsequent quantitative analysis. The positive proverbs will be referred to after the end of the discussion of the negative proverbs.

### **Data Analysis**

The 53 proverbs with negative connotations signal the following themes or images about women:

#### 1- Inferiority of women:

Women are explicitly portrayed as being inferior to men in the following proverb:

رجال في صرار (صرة) ولا مئة حرمة في دار

A man in a knap-sack is better than a hundred women in a house.

A man with a knap-sack is better than a hundred women with a house.

In Oman, it is very important for a man to own a house to provide a stable life for his family and save them from having to move from one place to another and from being at the mercy of others.

This proverb says even if a man has no house and he is moving around with his knap-sack, he will still be better off and more valuable than a hundred women who own a house. So this man who is moving around with his knap-sack, and who has no high social status, is still more important than any woman or number of women who own a house, regardless of their social status. No matter how much a woman's fortune is worth, she will still be inferior to a man who owns nothing at all. One man is more valuable than a hundred women. Clearly, this proverb is applied to women only, and it cannot be used to express inferiority of a man.

Women's inferiority could also be interpreted as resulting from the following subthemes:

1- A. Lacking intellectual abilities

The idea of women's inferiority is also captured by proverbs that express women's lack of intellectual abilities that correspond to men's intellectual abilities. Women are depicted as lacking intellect for several reasons as revealed in the following proverbs.

1-A. i. Being brainless

الحريم محرمات العقل.

The-women denied the-brain

Women are denied brains.

It is a common myth cross societies to view women as being without brains. This Omani proverb expresses this explicitly. This proverb criticizes women and stresses that they do not use their minds. A possible corollary of this proverb is that women are controlled by their emotions, they therefore do not use their minds. This proverb cannot apply to men.

Women can also be described as being brainless for several reasons as shown below.

- Being interested in trivial matters

Women's showing interest in trivial matters is reflected by the following proverb:

سارت تبيكي صوت جتها عبره.

Went-she she-cry a cry, came-to-her a tear

She went only to cry, but she actually shed tears.

The woman in this proverb had the intention to weep only slightly, but she sobbed meaningfully. It is possible that this woman went to a mourning house with the intention of pretending to cry, but she did not expect that she would end up crying for real. Thus her trivial goal led her to a bad consequence. It is interpreted that not only women show interest in trivial

matters, but also they do not pay attention to the consequences of those matters. This proverb can be applied to a man.

- Being easily fooled

Additional support to the image of women's brainlessness comes from the representation of women as being easily fooled, as inferred from the proverbs below.

حبّلها على غاربيها و بليس طار بها.

Rope-her on loose-her and Satan flew with-her

Her rope/leash is loose therefore Satan fooled her.

The woman in this proverb lacks self-control and does not use her mind to judge before acting, she therefore ends up being fooled by Satan. This leads her to act foolishly, resulting in embarrassing ends. This proverb sends the message that it is easy to deceive a woman. It may apply to men.

#### 1-A. ii. Being incompetent leaders

In the following proverb, it is depicted that women are incompetent leaders:

عورا تقود رمدانه.

Blind-she she-leads ophthalmic-she

A blind woman leading one suffering from ophthalmia.

In this proverb, a blind woman is said to lead a woman who is ophthalmic. It is used to refer to a person being incompetent and inefficient to lead others. Women are seen as lacking the ability to lead others due to their limited intellectual abilities. The English proverb: *The blind leading the blind* captures the image expressed here. This proverb may apply to men.

Women's lack of leadership is attributed to several reasons that might be inferred from other proverbs. These are presented below.

- Being impulsive and reckless

Women are described as impulsive and reckless in the proverb:

منش روحش تدوري الدق و لقيتي . تدور الدق و لفته.

Because of-you.fem yourself.fem you.fem-search for the-knock and found-you.fem

You yourself are the cause of your misfortune; you were looking for troubles and you have got them (Literally: you hunt after beating and have got it).

This proverb relates when he/she complains about being in trouble, he/she has brought that trouble unto himself/herself. The woman in this proverb was impulsive and reckless and seemingly looking for trouble and got them. She did not consider the consequences of her action and therefore is now in trouble. This proverb could apply to men. A person who is hasty and does not see beyond his/her nose, cannot lead.

- Being unable to resolve matters

Women's failure to lead is also inferred when they are described as lacking the ability to find solutions. Women are assumed to be unable to find solutions for serious matters, as shown in the proverb below:

من غلبش حبش كيليه .

If beaten-you.fem grain-your.fem, weigh-it-you.fem

During a bad economy when you can't sell your grain, just start weighing it.

It is assumed that the shopkeeper is a female. During a dull market or want of work, a woman is told to amuse herself by measuring out grain to herself. The woman is obviously in a bad situation and she does not know and cannot decide what to do or how to react. She is thus given the advice to start weighing her grain so she would amuse herself and at the same time make herself useful by being prepared when economy starts getting better, just the way a man would react if he were in her shoes. This proverb is negative because it gives advice for a woman and tells her how to act, assuming that she really needs this advice. A man on the other hand,

does not need this advice because it is taken for granted that he will just know how to act. The proverb may be applied to men.

- Making misjudgments

Women are also portrayed as lacking intellectual abilities that would make them competent leaders as a result of misconduct by their misjudgment. The following proverb illustrates this portrayal:

طبها عماها  
Medicine-her blinded-her  
Her medicine blinded her.

The woman in this proverb relies on her knowledge of medicine to treat herself. However, due to her misjudgment, she chooses the wrong cure, thus she causes herself to become blind. This proverb may apply to men.

- Being unfocused

Women's ineffectiveness to lead is further supported by saying that women are unfocused and they cannot see matters right in front of their eyes, as the following proverb shows:

تدور على بنها و بنها فتبانها  
She-looks for son-her and son-her in-lap-her  
She is looking for her son and her son is in her lap.

The woman in this proverb is making much effort in looking for her son, while her son has been in her lap the whole time. The proverb conveys that when matters might be obvious, a woman cannot see them. Therefore, women make needless effort that is not necessary in the first place.

Another example that shows women's lack of concentration is the proverb:

راحت تطحن و عرست.  
Went-she grind and wedded-she

She went to grind wheat/Mill but she ended up getting married.

The woman in this proverb is given the task of grinding wheat, but she forgets this task and gets involved in another one, that is, she ends up getting married. This gives the impression that women are unreliable and they can easily get distracted; they leave the tasks undone to pursue other ones. This proverb may apply to men.

#### 1-A. iii. Having unsound opinion

One more reason for the claim of women's lack of intellectual abilities is the proposal that women are controlled by their emotions. This could be elicited from proverbs like:

الحرمة شاورها و خالفها.

The-woman consult-her and contradict-her

Consult a woman, but oppose her opinion.

This proverb advises to consult a woman and then do just the opposite of her opinion. It is inferred that women are unable to form reliable sound opinions. It could be inferred from this proverb that women do not see focal points, and they only see marginal issues. Hence, women's opinions are unsound and unreasonable. The proverb cannot apply to men.

#### 1-B. Failing

Another source for women's inferiority is the belief that women always fail. Women's failure to execute tasks that they embark on is expressed through many proverbs. Different reasons are behind the failure. Different corollaries are interpreted, as the following subthemes suggest:

##### 1-B. i. Failing missions or tasks

تي تي تي تي كما سرتي جي تي .

Like went-you.fem came-you.fem

**Ti ti ti ti, kamasurti gi ti**

As you left you came back.

This proverb is said to a person who attempted to do a certain task, but all his/her efforts were in vain. It says to him/her: you failed to do what you wanted and you did not make any difference despite your effort. The phonological scheme is important here because the first part of the proverb (**Ti ti ti ti**) does not carry any meaning, but it is inserted to rhyme with the feminine marker-**ti** in the second part of the proverb (kamasurti gi **ti**). It is possible to apply this proverb to a man.

This particular proverb is used in contexts similar to the English: nah, nah, nah, nah, nah.

#### 1-B. ii. Doing tasks the wrong way

Women are depicted as acting in a way that opposes how they should act. Their actions could be violations of customs, as the following proverb shows:

سارت تبول رتحت تحت الطبول.

Went-she she-urinate, ended up-she under the drums

She went to urinate, but ended up where the drums were beating.

The woman in this proverb had hoped to urinate in a private manner according to custom, but inadvertently ended up urinating in public. This proverb illustrates a culturally way to do tasks, but if a person does not follow certain social guidelines, she/he ends up doing tasks improperly and failing them. It can apply to women and men.

In the next proverb, the categories of failure and lack of intellectual abilities are closely linked. Women's failure is interpreted as being linked to their limited intellect and to being oblivious, which makes them do things the opposite way.

سايه تبني الذرا جاها البرد من ورا.

Went-she she-build the-protection, came-to-her the-cold from behind

She went to build protection or shelter (from the front), but the cold came in from behind.

This proverb applies to a person who does exactly the opposite of what she/he should do. The woman here was trying to build a shelter that would protect her against winds; she was

focused on the front side of the shelter and forgot to consider the back side. Her failure here is due to her being oblivious. This proverb is applicable to a man.

An English speaker could imagine this proverb as building a house or shelter with a strong north-facing wall (to protect from the fierce north wind) only to have southern winds come and leave the occupants of the shelter very cold.

#### 1-B. iii. Being undetermined

Women's failure to keep a desired change is explained by their lack of determination as the following proverb shows:

عادت حليلة لعاتها القديمة.  
Came back-she Halima to-habit-her old

Halima is back to her old habits.

Halima had some bad habit and she did change it for the better. However, that change was made only for a while because Halima could not sustain the new habit, and she reverted to her old bad habit. This proverb may apply to men.

#### 1-C. Being submissive

The view of women as inferior to men leads to the depiction of women's subjectivity. Because of their inferiority, women are usually subjects to coercion. They have to submit to conditions imposed on them by men, as several proverbs indicate. One of these proverbs is:

بنت الصايغ تشتتهي الصوغ و بنت النساغ عريانه.

Daughter the-jeweler she-desires the jewels and daughter the-weaver is naked. The goldsmith's daughter pines for ornaments and the weaver's daughter is naked.

In this proverb, it appears that the goldsmith and the weaver are greedy men. It is their daughters who suffer from their meanness and greed because they are deprived of ornaments and clothes. This proverb does not apply to men.

The English proverb: *the cobbler's wife is the worst shod* could be close to the meaning expressed in this proverb.

## 2- Wickedness of women:

In several proverbs, women are portrayed as evil. Women's wickedness is reflected in three ways as shown below:

### 2-A. Refusing to help others

مريموه إذا شددت بابها باب الله مفتوح.

Muriemo if close-she door-her, door Allah open

When God's door of generosity and giving is open, Muriemo can try but will fail to close it.

Muriemo was a wily and cunning woman who lived in the region of Sayyid Sultan bin Hamad, who ruled the country a long time ago. She made wicked plans and used tricks and deception to make people stop helping those whom she hated. According to this proverb, even if Muriemo tries to prevent others from getting help, God is generous and He will send them help no matter what she does. This proverb may apply to a man.

عجوز و مانه بولتها.

Old-she and keep reminding—she of-urine-her

An old woman keeps reminding people, even though she is reminding them of urine.

In this proverb, an old woman reminds people of giving them her urine. Urine here is symbolic of something that is insignificant and unworthy of praise. It is something of low value, especially since it is the urine of an old woman, not a healthy young person. Because of its insignificance, a person should be ashamed of mentioning it.

A corollary of this proverb is: She would not help even when the thing is insignificant. This corollary refers to extortion where a person can provide help, but she/he would not. This proverb is applicable to men.

## 2- B. Lying

Women are accused of being liars and faking facts, as the following proverbs show:

زعلانه عشاها و تتعج عنه .

Angry-she dinner-her and she-keep away from-it

She feigned anger and wouldn't eat her dinner (and wouldn't let anyone eat it either).

The woman in this proverb lies about being angry and shows a lack of desire for her dinner, while in fact she has a sincere desire for the food. A corollary of this proverb is that women are drama queens; they are not straightforward and they are good at pretending. This proverb may apply to a man.

يوم ما عرفت تلعب قالت الملعب ضيق.

When not knew-she she-play, said-she the-playground narrow

When she didn't know how to play, she said that the playground was narrow.

The woman in this proverb fails to play properly. She justifies her failure by saying that it is not her fault. She is not able to perform because the playground is narrow. She is using a fake unreal excuse to hide her failure. It could apply to a man.

## 2- C. Being ungrateful

To describe a person as ungrateful for what she/he has now, the following proverb can be used:

توكل مال الزوج و تحن للمطلق .

She-eats money the-husband and she-yearns to-the-divorced

She eats at the expense of the present husband, but sings the praise of the ex-husband.

The woman described by this proverb is married to a man who is honoring her and being generous to her, but she is yearning for her ex-husband. She is thus an ungrateful person who does not appreciate what she has now. This proverb sends the message that such a woman should not be trusted. It cannot apply to a man.

## 2- D. Favoring negative circumstances

In the following proverb, a woman is depicted as being in a negative situation that appeals to her:

بكايه و مايت بنها.

Crier-she and dead son-her

A professional crier and her son are dead.

In every village and town in Oman, there are women who, though not paid, visit the houses of mourning to help the women there to cry loudly. It is not a job, but it is something that appeals to those women.

In this proverb, a woman has met her favorite circumstances. Her son is dead and she can now cry loudly. A person meeting his/her favorite circumstances and situation that appeal to him/her does not seem to be a negative subject matter. The issue here is that this theme is conveyed through associating women with a negative task. It is possible to apply this proverb to a man.

## 3- Talkativeness:

The idea of women being talkative is expressed in three proverbs. They also convey subsequent images that may be interpreted as corollaries:

### 3- A. Being meddlesome

مسعوده تاتي الخبر غير منشودة.

Mas'ooda she-brings the-news not asked-she

Mas'ooda brings news without being asked

In this proverb Mas'ooda spreads news without being asked. This woman is so talkative that she goes around looking for news and spreading them. She interferes with people's business and tries to know what is happening in their lives. Once she knows something, she tells everyone about it even though she is not asked to. It may apply to a man.

### 3- B. Being chatty to compensate weakness

من قل حيلها رغت

One who lack power-her prattled-she

She who has no power, talks a lot.

This proverb is used to express that a woman who lacks power resorts to talking to compensate for her weakness. It is implied that women cannot really achieve anything and they try to hide that by talking too much. It can apply to men.

### 3- C. Making constant quarrels

When two or more people constantly quarrel with each other, they are best described by the proverb:

كما لمشاركات.

Like the-wives of the same man

Like the two wives of the same man.

In Oman, men are allowed to marry up to four wives, according to the laws of Islam. In many cases, the wives of the same man have a conflicting relationship. They do not get along with each other most of the time, so they end up quarreling with each other. This observation led to the previous proverb, which refers to people who argue with each other frequently. In this sense, it could apply to men.

### 3- D. Exaggerating

People who exaggerate are described by the proverb:

تخلي من الحبة قبة.

She-makes from the-seed dome

She makes a dome out of a seed.

The woman in this proverb exaggerates matters. She makes a mountain out of a molehill. The proverb may apply to men.

#### 4- Weakness:

Women are portrayed as being weak and subject to unfortunate events as in:

ما تطيح السقيفة إلا على رأس الضعيفة

Not fall the-roof only on head the-weak-she

The roof only falls on the head of the weak one (one here refers to a female).

This proverb is used to express that the worst problems happen only to weak people and weak people being misfortunate. The proverb shows that when the roof fell, it fell only on the head of the weak woman. It may apply to men.

Closely connected to the idea of weakness is the image of women as unfortunate people who are always in bad situations, as the following proverb illustrates:

ما قاصر علعورا البرقع

Not missing from-the-blind the-barqa'

A blind woman is not in need for barqa' (a veil to cover a woman's face).

In this proverb, a woman is blind, thus, her situation is so bad. The last thing she needs is to cover her face and wear a barqa'. Wearing a barqa' could not make matters worse than they are. The proverb expresses that a person is in a bad enough situation that shouldn't get any worse. It could apply to men.

#### 5- Wastefulness:

Women are also portrayed as having the desire to waste things. It is necessary to have a man to control a woman's desire to be flamboyant:

تبغى من تينها و أعنابها و حاتم على بابها

She-wants from figs-its and grapes-its and Hatim on door-its

She wants frivolous things that can be wasted, but is prevented from this excess and exaggeration by the legend of Hatim and his overly exuberant generosity.

Hatim is a well-known man who was famous for his generosity. He used to give to others even if he had to deprive his own family. According to this proverb, if a woman has a farm whose guard is Hatim, she will still have the desire to waste the products of that farm. But her desire is not fulfilled because the guard, Hatim, has already given away the products of the farm.

An analogy should be made that women strive to spend excessively and waste whatever they have in their house. Husbands have the role of controlling women's compulsive desire by keeping whatever could be wasted away from their wives just like Hatim did (although he did it differently). The proverb does not apply to men.

6- Loss:

6- A. Losing control:

The idea of loss is expressed by referring to women losing control over tasks, as shown in the following proverbs:

كما بو مربية بنتها و والدة بقرتها .

Like one-who gave birth daughter-her and gave-birth cow-her

Like a woman whose daughter and cow both gave birth.

The woman described by this proverb is overwhelmed with duties because her own daughter has just given birth, as did her cow. The woman will need to do lots of duties for the sake of her daughter as the Omani custom stipulates. At the same time, she will also need to milk the cow to prepare cheese and gee, which requires much work. Because so much that needs to be done, this woman has lost control. This proverb refers to overwhelming busyness which is impossible to manage. It can apply to men.

6- B. Losing effort

When someone works hard on something, but his/her hard work goes in vain, the following proverb applies to him/her:

عليش خمسة و كيشش بخمسة و طلعي مسوق .

Owe-you.fem five, and sheep-you.fem with-five and get out-you.fem from-suq

You owe five and your sheep costs five and get out of the suq/market.

In this proverb, a woman delivers her sheep to the market to sell. However, the woman is indebted to the market for an equivalent value of a sheep. She therefore ends up with no debt, but with no sheep as well. So all the effort she made in raising the sheep and taking care of it was worthless, and all her hopes to get something out of her hard work shattered. This proverb describes lost effort where someone executes a lot of effort, but it all goes for paying debts and commitments. It may be used to refer to a man.

7- Disapproval of negative characteristics:

Old age and stubbornness are negative attributes that are rejected in Omani society. In proverbs, this rejection is not made through referring to men or by the use of generic masculine.

It is actually by referring to women, as follows:

7-A. Despising aging in women

When anything goes on for a long time, it will eventually become rotten. The idea that old age and procrastination are disfavored characteristics is conveyed by referring to women as:

إذا طالت بارت.

If stay longer-she, barren-she

If she stays longer, she is rendered barren.

When a woman stays unmarried for a long time, she eventually becomes a spinster and nobody would want to marry her because she will be just like sterile land that does not produce anything. A woman will also not be able to bear children when she is old. Procrastination leads to damage, and this is conveyed by referring to the effect of old age on women.

Old age is disfavored because it is connected to the image of losing strength, and being sick. Getting older therefore ruins ones health, so old age is not desired. The disfavor of old age

is captured by referring to women becoming spinsters as they grow older and stay unmarried. Although this could apply to men in the sense that procrastination is condemned, it does not convey that staying unmarried for a long time is bad for a man. It is a common tendency in most societies that when woman is unmarried, she is condemned and called a “spinster,” which is a pejorative term. An unmarried man on the other hand, is not a subject to such condemnation; he is simply a “bachelor,” a positive term. In this proverb, a woman is blamed and scolded for being a spinster, but a man is blamed for procrastinating tasks they should do, rather than procrastinating marriage.

#### 7- B. Disfavoring stubbornness and annoyance

Women are advised to be obedient, as it shows from the following proverb:

الحرمة النكدة و الأرض العنيدة و الحبل بو عقدة متعوذ منهم الرسول .

The-woman annoying-she and the-land stubborn and the-rope with tie asked. protection  
against- them the-prophet

The prophet has asked protection against annoying women, stubborn (barren) land, and knotted ropes.

According to this proverb, the prophet himself has asked God for protection against a stubborn, annoying woman. It is indicated how serious it is when a woman is stubborn by making her equal to a barren land and a knotted rope which are known by not being easily fixed. The disapproval of women’s stubbornness is also stressed saying that even the prophet asked protection against those three things. It is also hard to change a stubborn woman. Men therefore need to pray to God not to put such a woman in their lives, that is, as a wife. This proverb does not apply to men.

In a nutshell, the analysis reveals that the 53 negative proverbs represent images of women that belong to 7 main themes which in turn include several subthemes. Even though these

proverbs have feminine markers, the majority of the can apply to men. The proverbs' themes and applicability to men are represented in table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Proverbs' negative themes and applicability to men

Themes	Subthemes	Applicability to men
Inferiority of women	Explicit inferiority	Inapplicable
	A. Lacking intellectual abilities	
	A.i. Being brainless	Inapplicable
	• Being interested in trivial matters	Applicable
	• Being easily fooled	Applicable
	A.ii. Being incompetent leaders	Applicable
	• Being impulsive	Applicable
	• Being unable to resolve matters	Applicable
	• Making misjudgments	Applicable
	• Being unfocused	Applicable
	A.iii. Having unsound opinion	Inapplicable
B. Failing		
B.i. Failing missions or tasks	Applicable	
B.ii. Doing things the wrong way	Applicable	
B.iii. Being undetermined	Applicable	
C. Being submissive	Inapplicable	
Wickedness of women	A. Refusing to help others	Applicable
	B. Lying	Applicable
	C. Being ungrateful	Inapplicable
	D. Favoring negative situations	Applicable
Talkativeness	A. Being meddlesome	Applicable
	B. Being chatty as a sign of weakness	Applicable
	C. Making constant quarrels	Applicable
	D. Exaggeration	Applicable
Weakness		Applicable
Wastefulness		Inapplicable
Loss	A. Losing control	Applicable
	B. Losing effort	Applicable
Disapproval of negative characteristics	A. Despising aging in women	Applicable(to delaying)
	B. Disfavoring stubbornness and annoyance	Inapplicable

CHAPTER 5  
METHODOLOGY: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

**Data Collection**

The quantitative part of this thesis is largely dependent on the qualitative part. It is in particular a distributional analysis that targets the negative themes previously discussed. Based on the categories provided in the qualitative analysis, I designed a questionnaire with a representative sample of proverbs that reflect the negative themes. The questionnaire targeted young Omani males and females. Information was requested about the participants' age, gender and region. The participants were given 15 proverbs that included the following themes: 1) women's inferiority, 2) wickedness, 3) talkativeness, 4) weakness, 5) wastefulness, 6) loss, and 7) disapproval of negative characteristics. After each proverb, the participants were given the following set of questions:

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No
- b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neutral
- c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No
- d. Do you think it still applies to women in contemporary Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

These questions were designed to elicit information about the participants' recognition of these proverbs, their perception of the meanings of the proverbs and their judgments of the of the proverbs' applicability to men and validity in present Omani society.

With the assistance of my sisters, my brothers-in-law and my workmates, I distributed 200 questionnaires. I got back 50.5% of the questionnaires. Only 82% out of the 50.5% questionnaires were completed. The remaining 18% were incomplete in that some of the participants did not give the required background information (age or gender) and some did not answer all the questions. Therefore, I rejected those questionnaires and analyzed only the 83 complete ones.

The data were provided by the following numbers of participants:

Table 5-1. Numbers of participants

	Females	Males	Total
25 years or Older	23	16	39
Younger than 25	20	24	44
Total	43	40	83

Table 5-1 shows the numbers of participants in relation to their gender and age categories. The total number of the participants is 83; 43 of which are females and 40 are males. I had questionnaires from 23 females and 16 males who are 25 years or older. The rest of the participants were 20 females and 24 males who are younger than 25.

I chose to split the participants into the age categories of 25 or older and younger than 25 because they would have different levels of interactions with the opposite. Participants who are between 18 and 24 years old are mostly students and they interact with the opposite gender in a limited way. Besides their family members, males and females at this age would interact with people from the opposite gender in academic settings only. Even in that setting, their communication is restricted due to cultural constraints. Males and females who are 25 or older usually work with people from the opposite gender and their interactions are more frequent. They spend more time with each other, and the environment and work conditions call for more interaction. The different levels of exposure to contact with the other gender might have an influence on the views that young people have about women, which could in turn affect their belief of the proverbs presented to them.

Although information about participants' regions was requested, I do not include that category as a factor here, because I do not have representative numbers of participants from all the regions of Oman. Most of the participants are from three regions of the country. Thus, generalization will not be feasible.

## Data Analysis

The seven negative themes are reflected by several proverbs in the collection I had. The themes and their subthemes are presented below and their frequencies are illustrated by

Figure 5-1.

Negative Themes and subthemes:

1. Inferiority of women
  - A. Lacking intellectual abilities (being brainless, being incompetent leaders, having unsound opinion)
  - B. Failing (failing missions or tasks, doing tasks the wrong way, being undetermined)
  - C. Being submissive
2. Wickedness of women
  - A. Refusing to help others
  - B. Lying
  - C. Being ungrateful
  - D. Favoring negative circumstances
3. Talkativeness
  - A. Being meddlesome
  - B. Being chatty to compensate weakness
  - C. Making constant quarrels
  - D. Exaggerating
4. Weakness
5. Wastefulness
6. Loss
  - A. Losing control
  - B. Losing effort
7. Disapproval of negative characteristics
  - A. Despising aging in women
  - B. Disfavoring stubbornness and annoyance

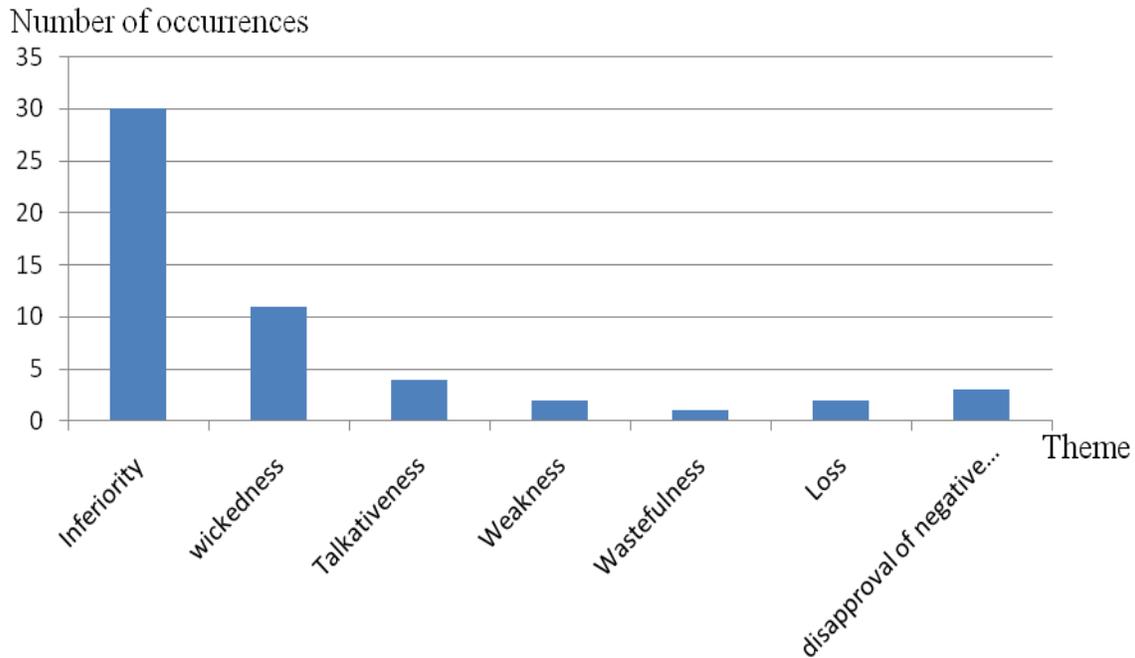


Figure 5-1. Frequencies of the negative themes

Figure 5-1 illustrates that inferiority of women, with its different sources, is the most frequent image. Thirty proverbs stress inferiority out of the collection of 53. Women’s wickedness, expressed by ten proverbs, comes next, followed by women’s talkativeness which is referred to by four proverbs. Disapproval of negative characteristics, and women’s weakness, wastefulness, and loss are less common than the other themes. Only one case of a proverb belongs to two categories. The results of the questionnaire will be presented first, and the explanation of these results will be provided in a subsequent discussion section<sup>1</sup>.

Analyzing the data for information about the theme of inferiority of women yielded the following results about the participants’ recognition of four of the proverbs that belong to this category:

<sup>1</sup> Tables are provided in this section; the results are given in figures that are provided as an appendix.

Table 5-2. Participants' recognition of proverbs of inferiority

	Explicit inferiority	Brainlessness	Failure	Having unsound opinion
Males 25 or older	75%	67%	75%	13%
Females 25 or older	54%	75%	46%	17%
Males less than 25	25%	58%	29%	17%
Females less than 25	15%	55%	25%	15%

Table 5-2 shows that 75% of males who are 25 or older recognize the proverb that explicitly describes women as inferior to men; 54% of the females, who belong to the same age category, recognize it. Twenty-five percent of the male participants who are younger than 25 know this proverb and only 15% of the younger female participants know it. More than half of the participants of both gender and age categories know the proverb that describes women as brainless, and it is worth noting that there is a big difference between younger and older females' recognition of this proverb. Seventy-five percent of the males aged 25 and older know the proverb which refers to women's failure; only less than half of the participants of other categories know it. Less than 20% of the participants identify the proverb that portrays women as having unsound opinion.

The participants' interpretations of these proverbs are shown in Table 5-3:

Table 5-3. Participants' interpretations of proverbs of inferiority

	Explicit inferiority	Brainlessness	Failure	Having unsound opinion
Males 25 or older	75%	69%	75%	13%
Females 25 or older	54%	75%	46%	17%
Males less than 25	25%	58%	29%	18%
Females less than 25	30%	8%	20%	20%

In Table 5-3, a proverb is interpreted as having a positive meaning if the participants give it a value of more than 50%. When the value is less than 50%, then the proverb is thought to have a negative meaning. Males and females older than 25 regard the proverb of explicit inferiority as a positive one. Males and females younger than 25 think that this proverb has a negative meaning. The proverb of women's brainlessness is also misinterpreted by older males

and females and by females younger than 25. The participants in these categories think that this proverb has a positive meaning; only younger males think it has a negative connotation. Older males regard the proverb of women's failure as conveying a positive image while the rest of the participants feel it reflects a negative one. All the participants judge the proverb of women having unsound opinion as a negative proverb.

Participants' judgments of whether those proverbs could apply to men are reflected in

Table 5-4:

Table 5-4. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of inferiority to men

	Explicit inferiority	Brainlessness	Failure	Having unsound opinion
Males 25 or older	75%	31%	69%	19%
Females 25 or older	71%	38%	67%	67%
Males less than 25	67%	33%	100%	58%
Females less than 25	75%	25%	65%	40%

In Table 5-4, a percentage closer to 100 means that the participants agree that a proverb applies to men; percentages less than 50 indicate participants' disagreement with the previous statement. Clearly, participants in all categories agree that proverbs of explicit inferiority and failure can be applicable to men. They also think that the proverb of brainlessness does not apply to men. Females older than 25 and males younger than 25 think that the proverb of having unsound opinion can be used to refer to men, while males older than 25 and females younger than 25 disagree with that.

Table 5-5. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of inferiority to women in present-day Omani society

	Explicit inferiority	Brainlessness	Failure	Having unsound opinion
Males 25 or older	44%	50%	62%	44%
Females 25 or older	38%	50%	71%	50%
Males less than 25	71%	50%	63%	71%
Females less than 25	40%	50%	70%	85%

Participants' reactions to whether or not these proverbs apply to women in contemporary Omani society are presented in Table 5-5.

Again, a percentage of 50 and above indicates the participants' agreement that a proverb still applies to women, while a percentage below indicates disagreement with the above statement. According to Table 5, all participants agree that proverbs of brainlessness and failure may still apply to women. Only males who are younger than 25 think that the proverb of explicit inferiority is still applicable to women. Only males who are 25 years or older think that the proverb of being emotional does not apply to women in present-day society.

Another investigated image is the perception of women as being wicked. This image is portrayed by referring to women as liars, refusing to help others, being ungrateful, and favoring negative situations. Analyzing the questionnaire for information about this theme gives the following results about the participants' recognition of proverbs in this category:

Table 5-6. Participants' recognition of proverbs of wickedness

	Lying	Refusal to help	Ungratefulness	Favoring negative situations
Males 25 or older	88%	38%	63%	56%
Females 25 or older	61%	26%	17%	13%
Males less than 25	63%	21%	13%	35%
Females less than 25	45%	15%	25%	30%

The proverb that portrays women as liars is recognized by 88% of the males and 61% of the females who are 25 or older; 63% of males younger than 25 know this proverb as opposed to 45% of females in the same age category. Less than half of the participants in all categories identify the proverb of women's refusal to help. Only older males are familiar with the proverb of women's ungratefulness; the rest of the participants barely know it. Only 56% of males who are 25 years or older are familiar with the proverb that refer to someone who meets favorite negative circumstances.

How participants understand these proverbs is shown in Table 5-7.

Table 5-7. Participants' interpretations of proverbs of wickedness

	Lying	Refusal to help	Ungratefulness	Favoring negative situations
Males 25 or older	56%	56%	38%	41%
Females 25 or older	37%	76%	20%	28%
Males less than 25	63%	73%	21%	40%
Females less than 25	30%	75%	12%	20%

Males of both age categories think that the proverb of lying is a positive one while females think it is a negative one. Fifty-six percent and 63% are the percentages of males who are 25 or older and males who are younger than 25 respectively. Since these percentages are higher than 50%, they indicate that these males value the proverb of lying as having a positive meaning. Females' older than 25 percentage is 37% and younger females' percentage is 30%. This indicates that these females understand this proverb as being negative. All participants interpret the proverb of refusal to help others as a positive one; they all give percentages that are between 56% and 76%. They all regard the proverbs of ungratefulness and favoring negative situations as negative proverbs; their scores in these proverbs are 41% or less.

Table 5-8 reflects the participants' judgments of whether or not these proverbs may be used to men.

Table 5-8. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of wickedness to men

	Lying	Refusal to help	Ungratefulness	Favoring negative situations
Males 25 or older	81%	50%	44%	31%
Females 25 or older	78%	97%	57%	30%
Males less than 25	79%	63%	46%	46%
Females less than 25	100%	80%	70%	40%

Nearly all participants agree that the proverbs of lying and refusal to help others are applicable to men. Male participants believe that the proverb of ungratefulness does not apply to men, while female participants believe it does apply to men. Most of the participants regard the proverb of favoring negative circumstances as inapplicable to men.

In Table 5-9, the results of the participants' responses to whether these proverbs apply to women nowadays are shown.

Table 5-9. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of wickedness to women in present-day Omani society

	Lying	Refusal to help	Ungratefulness	Favoring negative situations
Males 25 or older	81%	69%	63%	56%
Females 25 or older	74%	87%	74%	61%
Males less than 25	88%	83%	75%	75%
Females less than 25	80%	90%	85%	85%

Obviously, all the participants think that those proverbs apply to women nowadays, yet it is not a total consensus, that is, the percentage of the agreement ranges between 60s and 80s.

The image of women as talkative is portrayed by referring to women's interruption of others, being chatty as a sign of weakness, making constant quarrels, and exaggerating. In this way, the theme of weakness overlaps with the theme of talkativeness, that is, women try to compensate for their weakness by being chatty. The image of women as weak is tested within the image of talkativeness.

Table 5-10. Participants' recognition of proverbs of talkativeness

	Being meddlesome	Sign of weakness	Making constant quarrels	Exaggeration
Males 25 or older	50%	81%	75%	94%
Females 25 or older	22%	22%	96%	100%
Males less than 25	17%	17%	71%	75%
Females less than 25	25%	25%	90%	90%

Table 5-10 reveals the participants' familiarity with proverbs that depict women as talkative.

Women's being meddlesome is recognized by 50% males who are 25 or older; 81% of males in this category recognize the proverb of women's talkativeness to compensate for their

weakness. Only 22% of females who are 25 or older know both proverbs; 17% of younger males and 25% of younger females know those proverbs. The majority of the participants know the proverb that describes women as making constant quarrels; their recognition of this proverb ranges between 75% and 96%. With percentages that range between 75% and 100%, participants exhibit their familiarity of the proverb that refers to women's exaggeration.

Participants' understanding of these proverbs is shown in Table 5-11.

Table 5-11. Participants' interpretations of proverbs of talkativeness

	Being meddlesome	Sign of weakness	Making constant quarrels	Exaggeration
Males 25 or older	25%	63%	44%	47%
Females 25 or Older	28%	35%	26%	26%
Males less than 25	42%	49%	31%	33%
Females less than 25	20%	18%	10%	5%

In Table 5-11, all the proverbs get percentages that are below 50% by all the participants. Only the proverb of women's talkativeness as a sign of weakness is given a value of 63% by males who are 25 or older. This means that only those males think that this proverb has a positive meaning; the rest of the participants think it has a negative meaning. The rest of the proverbs are interpreted as being negative by all the participants.

Participants' judgments of the applicability of these proverbs to men are presented in Table 5-12.

Table 5-12. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of talkativeness to men

	Being meddlesome	Sign of weakness	Making constant quarrels	Exaggeration
Males 25 or older	44%	63%	63%	81%
Females 25 or older	74%	44%	26%	65%
Males less than 25	50%	67%	50%	71%
Females less than 25	75%	65%	35%	90%

Table 5-12 shows that 44% of males who are 25 or older think that the proverb of being meddlesome does not apply to men; the same percentage of females in this category think that the proverb of talkativeness as a sign of weakness does not apply to men. Between 50% and 75% of the rest of the participants think that these two proverbs could apply to men. Males think that the proverb of making constant quarrels does apply to men, while females think it does not apply to men. The majority of the participants think that proverb of exaggeration applies to men.

The participants' views of the applicability of these proverbs to women in present-day are reflected in Table 5-13.

Table 5-13. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of talkativeness to women in present-day Omani society

	Being meddlesome	Sign of weakness	Making constant quarrels	Exaggeration
Males 25 or older	81%	75%	81%	81%
Females 25 or older	91%	74%	83%	96%
Males less than 25	75%	75%	83%	88%
Females less than 25	90%	95%	100%	100%

Clearly, all the participants agree within a range between 74% and 100% that those proverbs apply to women in modern-day Oman. However, a total agreement by all the participants does not emerge.

Proverbs that relate to women's wastefulness and loss, disfavoring of old age, and favoring negative circumstances will be discussed next. Table 5-14 shows the participants' recognition of these proverbs:

Table 5-14. Participants' recognition of more Negative proverbs

	Wastefulness	Loss of control	Despising aging in women
Males 25 or older	44%	38%	31%
Females 25 or older	9%	39%	13%
Males less than 25	25%	29%	33%
Females less than 25	5%	10%	5%

In Table 5-14, percentages of the participants who recognize these proverbs are mostly less than 50%, that is, the majority of the participants do not know these proverbs.

Participants' understanding of these proverbs is given in Table 5-15.

Table 5-15. Participants' interpretations of more negative proverbs

	Wastefulness	Loss of control	Despising aging in women
Males 25 or older	44%	31%	16%
Females 25 or older	33%	30%	17%
Males less than 25	54%	48%	27%
Females less than 25	28%	30%	30%

Males younger than 25 evaluate the proverb of wastefulness as a positive one. All the other participants evaluate it as a negative one. All participants believe that the rest of the proverbs are negative.

Table 5-16 demonstrates participants' views of the applicability of these proverbs to men.

Table 5-16. Participants' judgments of the applicability of more negative proverbs to men

	Wastefulness	Loss of Control	Despising aging in women
Males 25 or older	56%	19%	44%
Females 25 or older	57%	26%	35%
Males less than 25	67%	50%	46%
Females less than 25	75%	35%	55%

Fifty-six percent of males and 57% of females who are 25 years or older believe that the proverb of wastefulness applies to men. The percentages go higher with younger participants; 67% of males and 75% of females think the proverb may be used to refer to a man; 50% of young male participants think that the proverb of loss of control applies to men. The majority of the participants disagree with that statement; 55% of the females who are younger than 25 think the proverb of despising aging in women should be applicable to men. The majority of the participants do not agree with them.

The participants' opinions about the applicability of these proverbs to women in present-day are given in Table 5-17.

Table 5-17. Participants' judgments of the applicability of more negative proverbs to women in present-day Omani society

	Wastefulness	Loss of Control	Despising aging in women
Males 25 or older	50%	31%	74%
Females 25 or older	65%	70%	52%
Males less than 25	79%	75%	75%
Females less than 25	90%	95%	50%

More than 50% of participants think that the proverb of wastefulness still applies to women in present-day Oman. Only 31% of males who are 25 or older think that the proverb of loss of control does not apply to women in present-day; the majority of the participants think it does apply to women. More than half of all participants judge the proverb of despising aging in women as applicable to women in contemporary Omani society.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

### **Interpretation of the Results**

Overall, not all these proverbs are familiar to young Omani males and females. Even those proverbs that are widely recognized by young people are not clearly understood. Many of the participants evaluate these proverbs as being positive despite the fact that they convey negative meanings. This observation is important because it leads to the conclusion that misconception is an indication that these proverbs are not really well known to young people, and they are not being properly used.

It is also important to highlight that young people think that the majority of these proverbs can be used to refer to men. From this observation, it is interpretable that the reflected images are not characteristics of women only; men can also exhibit the same characteristics.

Participants claim that many of these proverbs are still applicable to women in today's Omani society. However, they do not show total consensus, that is, a change is taking place in the society, and people do not totally agree with the images of women reflected in these proverbs. In addition, participants' misunderstanding of these proverbs could be a major factor in their judgments of whether or not the negative proverbs could apply to women in present-day Omani society. On the other hand, participants showed some disagreement about some of these proverbs applying to women in present-day Omani society. This change in attitudes is a strong evidence for the ongoing change in society's view of women.

### **Structure of Omani Society**

Omani society used to be patriarchal in which women were not equal to men. This view has been common in the Arabian Peninsula. Women had no role in economics, politics, or civil

life as these were domains of men. Although they outnumbered men, women were confined to domestics (Phillips, 1966).

Women were also denied access to education. Before 1970, which was the year of the renaissance of the country when Sultan Qaboos bin Said assumed power, Oman had only three schools, and they were all boys' schools. Schools for girls did not exist (Ministry of Information, 1991).

When His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said gained power in 1970, he encouraged Omani women to break out of their isolation and be next to their brothers in building the country. To enable them to do this, women were granted equal education to men. In his speech in 1970, His Majesty said, "We have not lost sight of the education of girls, half the community." He was stressing the importance of women's education. Omani women strove to take advantage of this opportunity and started to emerge into public life. As doors of education were open to them, employment in different sectors was made feasible. Women managed to get jobs at all levels and with equal rates to men (Ministry of Information website).

Omani women's contribution to the building of the country has extended to political life. Women were granted the right to vote and to run for seats in Majlis Al-Shuraa, the Consultation Council which was established in 1991. It began its life as "a partner of the government with the aim of building this nation and serving its citizens" (Ministry of Information website). Its members represent their respective states and provinces, and are elected by citizens aged 21 and older. Today, the Omani government has three female ministers, which is evidence of the involvement of women in contemporary Omani society and their legal equivalence to men.

### **Relating the Proverbs to Omani Society**

Why do negative images emerge when Omani proverbs with feminine markers are examined? These negative images can be related to the structure of traditional Omani society.

Women in the past did not have an equal position to men. They were deprived of education and confined to the household. Due to those inhibiting circumstances, they did not have the opportunities for intellectual development that men had access to. Thus, women were perceived as inferior and less intelligent beings. Themes that result from such characteristics were best represented in the oral tradition of proverbs by referring to women. It would be confusing to bring up those themes by using generic masculine because it is interpreted that such themes result from characteristics, such as inferiority and limited thinking abilities, that are typical of women in general not men.

### **Relating the Results to Omani Society**

Women's access to education has enabled them to be viewed as being equal to men. This accessibility to education has led to a change in the structure of Omani society from more hierarchical to more symmetrical, which in turn has resulted in a change in how women are viewed. This new perception has rendered a lot of proverbs, which portray women negatively, as being inapplicable in contemporary Omani society. Due to this, people have stopped using these proverbs in everyday life. This in turn has made these proverbs inaccessible to the younger generation. As the statistical analysis shows, many of these proverbs are familiar to young people, and many more are not properly understood by young Omani people. However, the change in the status of these proverbs is somewhat slow. A total consensus on the inapplicability of these proverbs is not reached yet; however, this is a natural situation. A change such this might take years and decades since it targets norms that are rooted in the society. At the same time, the Omani society is changing and developing progressively, and a consensus is therefore likely to be reached eventually.

## CHAPTER 7 INTERVIEWS

I conducted three short quasi-ethnographic interviews with Omani people of different ages, gender, and educational backgrounds. The information elicited from these interviews verified the findings of the qualitative analysis.

In an interview with an uneducated Omani woman who was in her 50s, she mentioned that people used proverbs a lot when she was a child, and she could hear old women and men use them quite often. She commented that nowadays not only young people refrain from using proverbs but also old people. She does not hear people of her age use proverbs as in the past. She, too, finally finds herself not using them.

When I presented her with many of the proverbs I collected, she knew most of them, but she said that she did not know some of them. We talked about the proverbs' meanings and she confirmed that they have negative insinuations. She stated that those proverbs were true to women in the past. As for now, she believes that because most women are educated, they cannot be subject to these proverbs. But she felt that uneducated women still represent these proverbs, which might be a reason why these proverbs still exist. According to this woman,

Now women are equal to men and they are even superior to them. A woman is a housewife and an employee at the same time. She is more powerful than a man. . . . A man cannot be without a woman. He only does his job, yet he cannot manage other things. A woman, on the other hand, can manage all the roles she has.

The above quote indicates that women have different status in the society and they are more valued nowadays. This change could be a reason for the change in how women are perceived, which in turn can lead to a reduction in the use of the negative proverbs.

A second interview was conducted with a 34-year-old Omani woman. She had a limited education. She did not get any education as a child so went to night school when she was 12 years old. She mentioned that she used to hear proverbs being used by old women when she was

a little girl, and she can still hear them now. Yet she does not use proverbs very much because she does not like many of the proverbs that people use. She maintained that she disagrees with many of the proverbs that relate to women because these proverbs are unfair to women, especially women today. According to her, women are criticized by the majority of our proverbs, but men are not despite the fact that women and men make the same mistakes. She emphasized the point that women were viewed as inferior to men by referring to the following situation:

In the past, it was a stigma that a woman walks next to her husband. There had to be a long distance between them. . . she was a follower to a man; and the distance between them had to be far.

This quote describes how far from men women were thought to be, literally and metaphorically. The interviewee stated that the negative proverbs applied to women in the past because

The situation of woman made her subject to them. She was not given chances that men had and she was not given acknowledgment the way men were. Her opinion was not heard or considered. Even in the house, the father was the one to be consulted in matters that related to his children and the mother was disregarded.

As for now, she does not think that these proverbs should apply to women anymore because

[A woman] is now equal to a man. She works, she has education, and so she is not inferior to a man. Now there are even women who are far away from men and are better than men.

The interviewee said that she did not know many of those collected proverbs, and that she did not think that these proverbs will continue to exist in the future due to the changes that the Omani society is going through.

When I asked the two female interviewees whether or not they wanted their children to learn the negative proverbs, they firmly replied that they did not want their children to learn them or even hear them.

A fourth interview was with a 32-years-old Omani man. He is a university lecturer with a masters degree in multimedia. The interviewee mentioned that he tends to use proverbs a lot in his daily life, and he also hears many of them, especially from men, old and young, since he spends most of his time with men. Yet, he feels that young people now use proverbs in less meaningful and effective ways. When I asked him about his opinion of negative proverbs about women, he responded:

I consider them as some of the negative components of our Omani society. The negative components that the society was raised with and became. . . [rooted in it]. You know in our society, traditions and customs are more powerful than anything including religion. . . so these [proverbs] only existed in our society because there existed the notion that masculinity requires umhhmm.. imposing power on the other gender.. on women.

According to this lecturer, negative images of women emerged in Omani proverbs because of the belief of male dominance in traditional Omani society. This belief called for women's repression, and so these images were imposed on women. His responded to whether or not these images display the reality of women in the past by saying that if these images represented women in the past, it was because of society's unfair treatment of women. He said it was not because women were really like what they were described. The following quote elaborates this:

The woman in the past. . . well for sure she was not like this and as evidence for that, there are lots of things in our history, forget about our Islamic history and consider the recent history. You can hear about women who had important roles.

I think that the reason behind these images is that the society suppressed women. They were denied education; women also don't have opinions because they were denied the chance to have ones in the first place. So how come they are expected to lead or something like that?!

So even if she is given the slightest chance, a woman's opinion was weak and that's because the woman was not used to give her opinion. In the past she even did not have a say in her marriage and that's her basic right, so when will she have an opinion? So if you raise a person to be without an opinion, is it reasonable to expect her/him to form opinions? So that's it; she was raised to be without opinion without so and so. . . and when she was all grown up, she could not change it. I think that even if these images apply to a large percentage of women in our society, this is

only because of the society's unfair treatment towards women, not because of Omani women's character.

The interviewee's opinion of a woman who uses these proverbs is that she deserves to be a subject to these proverbs. He continues,

I mean we as men are trying to destroy such things and images and it is a disaster that a woman confirms these images [by using those proverbs]. . . . By the way, sometimes..umhmm, I blame them and I excuse them. I blame them because they should be trying to change these images. I excuse them because those things have become a [habit]

He added that most proverbs with feminine morpheme are centered on negative images. He said,

What I feel from those [proverbs] I hear is that negativity is reserved for women while positivity is for men. . . . I feel that what makes a major split here is that society has given women negative images and men positive ones. Therefore we find proverbs, which have neutral meanings are in masculine, but it is generic. . . . When a proverb has a positive meaning, it is in masculine, but which is not generic masculine. It is rather real masculine because in our society, "masculine" means "positive" and "feminine" means "negative"

The interviewee thinks that it is hard for these proverbs to continue to exist to a large extent in the future. He expects that many of the negative proverbs will disappear because of the changes that Omani society is going through today. He states,

Now you can find that many of these proverbs people might be even embarrassed to say them. So they will disappear for sure. This is because for one thing people now use different type of language when they interact with each other. For another thing, the mentality of the society is now different and culture is now different. Now even if a man looks down to women, he cannot say that out loud because this act is now linked to backwardness. . . . so these are all factors that lead to literal deletion of such proverbs. And this is possibly one of the positive effects of civilization.

Yet, he maintained that some proverbs, especially those that have positive connotations, will continue to exist. He stated that it is a case where "survival of the fittest" is applicable. In the end, we could interpret some of these proverbs positively. As an example, he mentioned,

“الحرمة حيلها فلسانها” (A woman’s strength is in her tongue.) I think this is one of the proverbs that are not completely negative about women. Women are known in all cultures and civilizations that they are weak; and this is not regarded as a cardinal sin. On the contrary, this may be a positive thing. . . . it may be a sign of women’s courtesy and so on.

He offered an example of a positive Omani proverb that, according to him, gives women their right:

The proverb “There are Hareem and there are Haramram, and there is kabsh uramerm” it means that not all women are equal. There are average women and there are women who have a big value. And there are those who just follow anybody and don’t think. You get me? So I think this gives women their right, no more no less. An in a nutshell, women are just like me; there are good and bad. And there are those whom you can depend on and those whom you cannot depend on.

The interviews shed light on how some Omani people feel about negative proverbs about women. The interviewees agree that these proverbs were true in the past, for reasons that were imposed on women. However, they believe that these proverbs do not describe the reality of women today. These proverbs are likely to disappear since people have already stopped using them so frequently. They want the Omani society to keep only its positive proverbs, and the Omani culture should be fairer to women today. They feel that women have a better status today, and women have proved that they do not present the negativity reflected by these proverbs.

The review of negative Omani proverbs about women was established qualitatively and quantitatively. Chapter 7 will provide an examination of the 10 positive proverbs about women as previously mentioned.

## CHAPTER 8 POSITIVE IMAGES OF WOMEN IN OMANI PROVERBS

Despite all the negativity concerning women in this collection of proverbs, some positive images of women emerge in 10 proverbs collected. These proverbs send a sense of fairness to women:

1.

السبالة فعين أمها غزال

The monkey-she in-eye mother-her gazelle

In the eye of her mother, a monkey is a gazelle.

This proverb describes a mother's unconditional love for her children. She is always proud of them despite their behavior. It admits a woman's consistent, absolute love and care for her children. The English proverb All her geese are swans expresses the meaning of this proverb.

2.

إذا بغيت البنية علية بالمهية

If want-you. masc the-daughter should-you.masc the-mother

If you want the daughter, you should pay attention to the mother.

This proverb is used to offer advice to a man who wants a woman for marriage. He is advised to focus on the woman's mother and try to make her like him. The task of marrying the girl will be made easier through the help of her mother. The proverb admits a mother's significant role in the lives of her children and her valuable help.

3.

ضربة الأربعين كما حرة فربعين

A strike of- forties like woman in-forty

A strike during forties is of equal pain to that of a woman after her delivery.

In the Arab culture, the first 40 days after delivering a baby are very critical. A woman is known to be weak and in great pain. Much attention is paid to her, and she is taken care of until that period is over and she has recovered.

In the past, Omani people had to work hard. They used to wake up around 4a.m. and do hard work on their farms until sunset. Their life condition made them go through much hardship so that their health could easily be affected. Until recently, Omanis did not live for long time; many died in their 70s. It used to be the case that when a 40-years old man or woman has a health problem, his/her life would be at risk.

Forties is thus related to being in danger. A woman's life is in danger until the 40 days after her deliver pass. A person's life is in danger if his/her health collapses at the age of 40.

This proverb is used to describe pain and struggle. When someone's health collapses after 40 years of age, he/she experiences great pain that is said to be just like what a woman goes through during the 40 days after delivering a baby. A collapse in health after the age of 40 could be devastating, and this is captured by this proverb. The proverb gives acknowledgment to women's suffering and praises them for enduring it. It says that a woman life is threatened and she goes through a lot of pain during the course of her pregnancy and even after her delivery. What she goes through is dangerous and could be as fatal as a collapse in the health of a 40-years-old. Yet a woman is strong enough to overcome her pain and survive, which is not an easy task. Even though the proverb is used in a negative situation, it expresses a positive attribute about women, which is enduring pain.

4.

بو شاله الشلول كله ما يغلبها موخل

Who bears-she the-load whole not overcome-her sieve

She who bears the whole load is not overcome by a sieve.

The woman in this proverb has a very heavy load; she is used to it and manages it.

Therefore, adding something extra, such as a sieve, to her load will not matter much and she will be able to handle it. This proverb praises women's patience and ability to put up with hardships.

5.

بو تعاونت ما غلبت

Who she-cooperated not defeated

She who cooperated was not defeated.

The woman in this proverb could not lose because she cooperated with others. The proverb admits that women's cooperation leads them to success. It is an invitation for collaboration and uniting with others to achieve goals. It also serves to warn women, and men, against dividing up because it could result in failure.

6.

بو تفر تحط

Who she-flies lands

She who flies away comes back.

The proverb says that a person who leaves and changes her/his place or original state would eventually come back to her/his origin and will not stay away for good. The proverb is about one's coming back to her/his roots. Omani culture stresses the importance of family and background. Therefore, people stick to their hometowns, and their values and beliefs. They could move or change their customs, but they will eventually come back. This proverb says that a person might move, physically or metaphorically, but he/she will never forget his/her roots. The proverb depicts a woman as loyal and sincere enough to come back to her roots.

7.

بو فجيها يستر عيها

What in-pocket-her hide vice-her

What is in her pocket is enough for her and keeps her away from committing vices.

The woman in this proverb does not have much income, and the money she gets is too little to survive. Yet she uses her limited supplies and resources to get through life. She does not let her needs drive her to be sinful. She is rather content with what she has and refrains from sins, such as stealing or prostituting, by which she can get more money. This proverb addresses women's contentment and abstinence, and advises them to keep such characteristics.

8.

كل خايبة/عاجزة و لها بخت

Every unsuccessful-she and she-has luck

Any unsuccessful woman has luck.

According to this proverb, a woman might be unsuccessful, but one day she will get lucky and succeed. This proverb says that even the lowliest will sometimes come to the fore. It is about being optimistic. The English proverb Every dog has its day captures the meaning of this proverb.

9.

الرجال بالحي و النساء بالسحي

Men with-beard and women with- hair

Men are known by their beards and women by their hair.

As said by this proverb, women and men are different and distinguished by their separate characteristics. A man has a beard and a woman wears long hair, that is, each gender is unique and should be proud of the way she or he is. The proverb could also refer to division of labor between men and women. Each gender fulfills different duties from the other one, yet each gender's roles are equally indispensable and important. For our purpose here, the proverb declares that women should be proud of who they are and of what they do. They should not try to violate their nature by trying to become like men. It does not say that women should not strive; it rather advises women of keeping their unique qualities.

10.

الحرمة بالورس و النخلة بالدرس

The-woman with-wars and the-date palm with pen.

A woman is known of wearing wars; just as a date-palm is known of being the place where goats are kept.

This proverb says that it is taken for granted that women are well known for taking care of themselves and trying to maintain their beauty. An Omani woman always wears wars (a substance that is applied to the body and produces a good smell) as she takes care of her body. People know about women's attention to their beauty just as they know that a date-palm is known for being the place where goats are kept (this is a common knowledge shared by the farming community). The English phrase girls are sugar and spice and everything nice might be close in meaning to this proverb.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

This study has examined Omani proverbs with feminine markers. It is an initial attempt to explore an area which has not previously been tackled from a sociolinguistic standpoint. I used my emic perspective as an Omani woman to analyze those proverbs. The study offers a qualitative analysis of negative proverbs that have a feminine marker. This analysis reveals that despite the fact that proverbs with a feminine marker express images that may refer to women and men, most of these proverbs refer to negative images or tasks. In other words, negativity is transmitted through generations by referring to women. Further investigation of how Omani society was structured reveals that women in the past were associated with negative tasks because of their inferior position, as compared to men. People in the past believed that negative attributes were not typical of men and that men would not usually carry out tasks that ignorant people would do. Therefore using a generic masculine morpheme to express negative images was not an option, and they decided that using a feminine morpheme with negative images would make much sense.

A distributional analysis targeted those negative proverbs to uncover their status in contemporary Omani society. This analysis shows that some of these proverbs are familiar to young Omanis, but it also shows that many people do not know these proverbs. Even though people know these proverbs, they misinterpret them. It also appears that young people believe that these proverbs pertain to men in most cases, and they are not characteristics of women alone. The analysis also confirms that many young Omani males and females think that many of these proverbs do not hold true today. The standing of these proverbs is changing due to changes in the structure of the society.

Omani women have gained power during the past 40 years. The change in the society implies a change in how women are perceived nowadays. They are no longer inferior to men, but viewed as competent as men are; in some cases, women even surpass men.

Despite the negativity, women were given some acknowledgment in few Omani proverbs. A sense of fairness to women is derived in proverbs that give recognition to women's unconditional love and their constant attention their children, their struggle in life, their patience, loyalty, and abstinence. Women are also recognized for their care and custody of their beauty, and they are advised to be proud of being women. It was fair enough to present these proverbs after the discussion of negative proverbs to show that Omanis in the past tried to be just to women. My other goal is to show that it is not the desire of Omanis to marginalize women, which in turn can boost the spirits of young women and motivate them to change the past stereotypes. Young men can also foster this change once they are convinced that women, even in the past, have not acted negatively.

A novel task that was undertaken by this study is examining the proverbs from a linguistic perspective. The types of feminine markers that appear in the proverbs and the configurations of the proverbs have been uncovered. In addition, it has been shown that proverbs can function as speech acts, and they can be FTAs.

This study is by no means conclusive. Further developments and additions can be made. More investigation can lead to acquiring more data to be scrutinized. Different methodology might prove useful in testing stereotypes about women in the past and the position of young generations toward them. Will the change noticed by this study continue? Who will lead the change? These can be topics for future research in this area. This study could also inspire future

research in the area of gender and language to examine gender representation in other literary forms.

APPENDIX A  
PROVERBS TRANSCRIPTION

**Negative Proverbs**

- 1- توكل مال الزوج و تحن للمطلق .  
She-eats money the-husband and she-earns to-the-divorced  
She eats at the expense of the present husband, but sings the praise (literally: yearns towards) of the ex-husband
- 2- بابه تزعل و ما متفقيه من شغل بيتها .  
Wants-she she-to seem to be annoyed but not free-she from duty household-her  
She wants to seem to be annoyed, but she is not free from her household duties.
- 3- بكايه و مايت بنها .  
Crier-she and dead son-her  
A professional crier and her son are dead.
- 4- بنت الصايغ تشتهي الصوغ و بنت النساج عريانه .  
Daughter the-jeweler she-desires the jewels and daughter the-waver is naked.  
The goldsmith's daughter pines for ornaments and the weaver's daughter is naked.
- 5- سارت تبكي صوت جتها عبره .  
Went-she she-cry a cry, came-to-her a tear  
She went only to cry, but she actually shed tears.
- 6- سارت تبول نتحت تحت الطبول .  
Went-she she-urinate, ended up-she under the drums  
She went to micturate, but ended up where the drums where beating.
- 7- سايه تربي نتحت في الغبي .  
Went-she she-deliver, ended up-she in Al-Ghabbi
- 8- سايره تبني الذرا جاها البرد من ورا .  
Went-she she-build the-protection, came-to-her the-cold from behind  
She went to build protection or shelter (from before), but the cold came in from behind.
- 9- طالبة الواحم كلته المربية .  
Asked-she the-pregnant, ate-she the-confined  
The pregnant woman asked for it, but the new-mother ate it.
- 10- عورا تقود رمدانه .  
Blind-she she-leads ophthalmic-she  
A blind woman leading one suffering from ophthalmia.
- 11- مريوموه إذا شددت بابها باب الله مفتوح .  
Muriemo if close-she door-her, door Allah open  
If Muriemo closes her door, the door of God is open..NO
- 12- مسعوده تاتي الخبر غير منشودة .  
Mas'ooda she-brings the-news not asked-she  
Mas'ooda brings news without being asked.
- 13- تدور الدق و لفته . منش روحش تدوري الدق و لفتي .  
Because of-you.fem yourself.fem you.fem-search for the-knock and found-you.fem  
You yourself are the cause of the misfortune; you hunt after beating and have got it.
- 14- من غلبش حبش كيليه .  
If beat-you.fem grain-your.fem, weigh-it-you.fem  
Owing the victory (of the times) over you, measure out your grain (to yourself.)

- During bad economy when you can't sell your grain, just start weighing it.
- 15- تودر بنها و تربي غبنها .  
She-leave son-her and she-raise bastard-her  
She leaves her legitimate child and bring up her bastard one.
- 16- يوم ما عرفت تلعب قالت الملعب ضيق .  
When not knew-she she-play, said-she the-playground narrow  
When she didn't know how to play, she said that the play-ground was narrow.
- 17- إذا طالت بارت .  
If stay longer-she, barren-she  
If she stays longer, she is rendered barren.
- 18- تبغى من تينها و أعنابها و حاتم على بابها .  
She-wants from figs-its and grapes-its and Hatim on door-its  
She wants from its fig and grapes, but Hatim is standing by her door.
- 19- تدور على بنها و بنها فثبانها .  
She-looks for son-her and son-her in-lap-her  
She is looking for her son and her son is in her lap.
- 20- تيتي تيتي كما سرتي جيتي .  
Like went-you.fem came-you.fem  
Ti ti ti ti, kamasurti gi ti  
As you left you came back; you did not make any difference and your effort was made in vain.
- 21- جالسه في الكله و حسها ورا الحله .  
Sitting-she in the-group and sense-her behind the-area  
She is sitting with everyone, but her mind is in another place.
- 22- حبلها على غاربها و بليس طار بها .  
Rope-her on loose-her and Satan flew with-her  
Her rope/leash is loose therefore Satan fooled her.
- 23- الحرمة شاورها و خالفها .  
The-woman consult-her and contradict-her  
Consult a woman, but ignore her opinion.
- 24- الحرمة النكدة و الأرض العنيدة و الحبل بو عقدة متعوذ منهم الرسول .  
The-woman annoying-she and the-land stubborn and the-rope with tie asked. protection against- them the-prophet  
An annoying woman, a stubborn (barren) land and a knotted rope are things that the prophet has asked protection against.
- 25- الحرمة حيلها فلسانها .  
The-woman strength-her in-tongue-her  
A woman's strength is in her tongue.
- 26- الحريم محرمات العقل .  
The-women denied the-brains  
Women are denied brains.
- 27- راحت تطحن و عرست .  
Went-she grind and wedded-she  
She went to grind wheat/Mill but she ended up getting married.
- 28- زعلانه عشاهها و تنعج عنه .  
Angry-she dinner-her and she-keep away from-it

- She feigning angry and wouldn't eat her dinner (and wouldn't let anyone eat it either.)  
 29- بو تدور بحبها يطحنولها اياه .  
 One-who she-go around with-seed-her they-grind-for-her it  
 She who goes around with her seeds, it will be ground for her.
- 30- سارت تبكي صوت جاتها ضحكة .  
 Went-she she-cries a cry, came-to-her a laugh  
 She went to cry, but she laughed.
- 31- شربي و لا العصا .  
 Drink-you.fem or the-stick  
 Drink or you will be beaten.
- 32- شاييه و مقنيه .  
 Old-she and hard  
 She is too old.
- 33- عادت حليلة لعاتها القديمة .  
 Came back-she Halima to-habit-her old  
 Halima is back to her old habits.
- 34- عجوز و مانه بولتها .  
 Old-she and keep reminding—she of-urin-her  
 An old woman and she is reminding others with her urine.
- 35- العروس تمدحها مها .  
 The-bride compliment-her mother-her  
 A bride is complimented and praised by her mother.
- 36- عليش خمسة و كبشش بخمسة و طلعي مسوق .  
 Owe-you.fem five, and sheep-you.fem with-five and get out-you.fem from-suq  
 You owe five and your sheep costs five and get out of the suq (market.)
- 37- كما بو مربية بنتها و والدة بقرتها .  
 Like one-who gave birth daughter-her and gave-birth cow-her  
 Like a woman whose daughter and cow both gave birth.
- 38- كما لمشاركات .  
 Like the-wives of the same man  
 Like the two wives of the same man.
- 39- كوني على الشرط راضية ولا دوري الحبل و اختتقي .  
 Be-you.fem of the condition satisfied-you.fem or look for the-rope and suffocate-you.fem  
 You either submit to the conditions or look for a rope and suffocate.
- 40- كما بلوشية غرقان زوجها .  
 Like Balushi-she drowned husband-her  
 Like a Balushi woman whose husband has drowned.
- 41- رجال في صرار (صررة) ولا مئة حرمة في دار .  
 A man in a knap-sack is better than a hundred women in a house  
 A man with a knap-sack is better than a hundred women with a house.
- 42- يوم عورا عن اليرق ما صما عن الرعد .  
 If blind-you.fem from the-lightening not deaf-you.fem from the-thunder  
 If you (a female) are blind and cannot see lightening, you are not deaf or unable to hear thunder.
- 43- ما قاصر علعورا البرقع .  
 Not missing from-the-bind the-barqa'

- A blind woman is not in need for barqa' (a veil to cover a woman's face.)
- 44- من وَّل حيلها رغت  
One who lack power-her prattled-she  
She who has no power, talks a lot.
- 45- يوم ما عرفت ترقص قالت الميدان ضيق  
When not know-she she-dance said-she the-playground narrow  
When she did not know how to dance, she claimed that there was not enough space.
- 46- ما تطيح السقيفة إلا على رأس الضعيفة  
Not fall the-roof only on head the-weak-she  
The roof only falls on the head of the weak she
- 47- هي ترقص ومن عمرها ينقص  
She she-dances and from age-her decrease  
She is busy dancing while the years of her life are passing.
- 48- يوم ما رامت على الجراب دارت على الجزلة  
When couldn't-handle-she the-saddlebag turned-she to the-small-bundle  
When she could not handle the large saddlebag she turned to the small bundle.
- 49- تخلي من الحبة قبة .  
She-makes from the-seed dome  
She makes a mountain out of a molehill.
- 50- زوعها و تلحسه  
Vomit-her and is sucking-it-she  
It is her vomit and she is sucking it
- 51- طبها عماها  
Medicine-her blinded-her  
Her own medicine made her blind
- 52- فندال ديول قيسية و شبريه  
Red-potatoes of Diyol measure-it-you.fem  
Measure red-potatoes from Diyol; when you don't know how to handle something
- 53- الطباخ للبياسر و الأكل لبنات ناصر  
Cooking for-slaves and eating for-Nassir's daughters  
The slaves handle the cooking and Nassir's daughters eat

### Positive Proverbs

- 1- السبالة فعين أمها غزال  
The monkey-she in-eye mother-her gazelle  
In the eye of her mother, a monkey is a gazelle
- 2- اذا بغيت البنية عليك بالمهية / صبر على المهية لين تلاقي البنية  
If want-you. masc the-daughter should-you.masc the-mother  
If you want the daughter, you should pay attention to the mother
- 3- ضربة الاربعين كما حرمة فربعين  
A strike of- forties like woman in-forty  
A strike during forties is of equal pain to that of a woman after her delivery
- 4- بو شاله الشلول كله ما يغلبها موخل  
Who bears-she the-load whole not overcome-her sieve  
She who bears the whole load is not overcome by a sieve

- 5- بو تعاونت ما غلبت  
Who she-cooperated not defeated  
She who cooperated was not defeated
- 6- بو تفر تحط  
Who she-flies lands  
She who flies away comes back
- 7- بو فحبيها يستر عيها  
What in-pocket-her hide vice-her  
What is in her pocket is enough for her and keeps her away from committing vices
- 8- كل خايبة / عاجزة و لها بخت  
Every unsuccessful-she and she-has luck  
Any unsuccessful woman has luck
- 9- الرجال باللحي و النساء بالسحي  
Men with-beard and women with- hair  
Men are known by their beards and women by their hair
- 10- الحرمة بلورس و النخلة بدرس .  
The-woman with-wars and the-date palm with pen.  
A woman wears wars (a substance that is applied in the body and produces a good smell)  
and a date palm is known for being the place where goats are kept.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Arabic Version of the Questionnaire

إستبيان عن الأمثال العمانية

• معلومات عامة:

العمر: ( ) أقل من 25 ( ) 25 فما فوق  
الجنس: ( ) ذكر ( ) أنثى  
المنطقة: .....

1 - رجال في صرار (صرة) ولا مئة حرمة في دار

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

2 - الحريم محرمات العقل.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

3 - سايره تبني الذرا جاها البرد من ورا .

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

4 - يوم ما عرفت تلعب قالت الملعب ضيق .

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

5 - مريوموه إذا شدت بابها باب الله مفتوح .

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

6 - توكل مال الزوج و تحن للمطلق .

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

7 - مسعوده تاتي الخبر غير منشودة .

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى: ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 8- من قل حيلها رخت.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 9 - كما بلوشية عُرقان زوجها.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 10 كما لمشاركات.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 11 تبغى من تينها و أعابها و حاتم على بابها.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 12 تخلي من الحبة قبة.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 13 كما بو مرببة بنتها و والدة بقرتها.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 14 شايبة و مقتبة.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## 15 بكايه و مايت بنها.

- أ. هل تعرف هذا المثل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ب. هل تعتقد أنه يعكس معنى : ( ) ايجابي ( ) سلبي ( ) محايد  
ت. هل تعتقد أنه يمكن أن ينطبق على الرجل؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا  
ث. هل تعتقد أنه ينطبق على المرأة في مجتمعنا العماني المعاصر؟ ( ) نعم ( ) لا

## English Version of the Questionnaire

### A Questionnaire about Omani Proverbs

- Informants' information:

Age: ( ) less than 25 ( ) 25 or more

Gender: ( ) Male ( ) Female

Region: .....

1- رجال في صرار (صرة) ولا مئة حرمة في دار

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

2- الحريم محرمات العقل

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

3- سايره تبني الذرا جاها البرد من ورا .

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

4- يوم ما عرفت تلعب قالت الملعب ضيق .

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

5- مريوموه إذا شدت بابها باب الله مفتوح .

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

6- توكل مال الزوج و تحن للمطلق .

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

7- مسعوده تأتي الخبر غير منشودة .

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

8- من وُل حيلها رغت

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

9- كما بلوشية غرقان زوجها

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter

- c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

كما لمشاركات. 10-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

تبغى من تينها و أعنابها و حاتم على بابها. 11-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

تخلي من الحبة قبة. 12-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

كما بو مربية بنتها و والده بقرتها. 13-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

شايبة و مقنبة. 14-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

بكايه و مايت بنه. 15-

- a. Do you recognize this proverb? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
b. Do you think its meaning is: ( ) positive ( ) negative ( ) neuter  
c. Do you think it applies to men? ( ) Yes ( ) No  
d. Do you think it still applies to women in nowadays Omani society? ( ) Yes ( ) No

APPENDIX C  
 FIGURES OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS' RESULTS

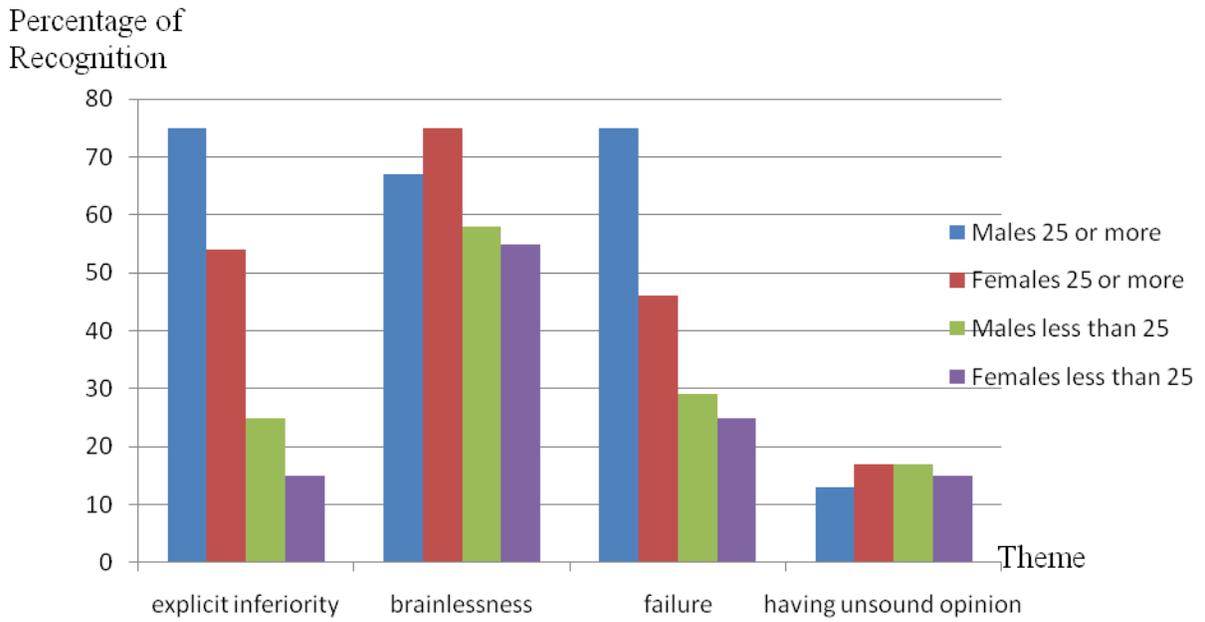


Figure C-1. Participants' recognition of proverbs of inferiority

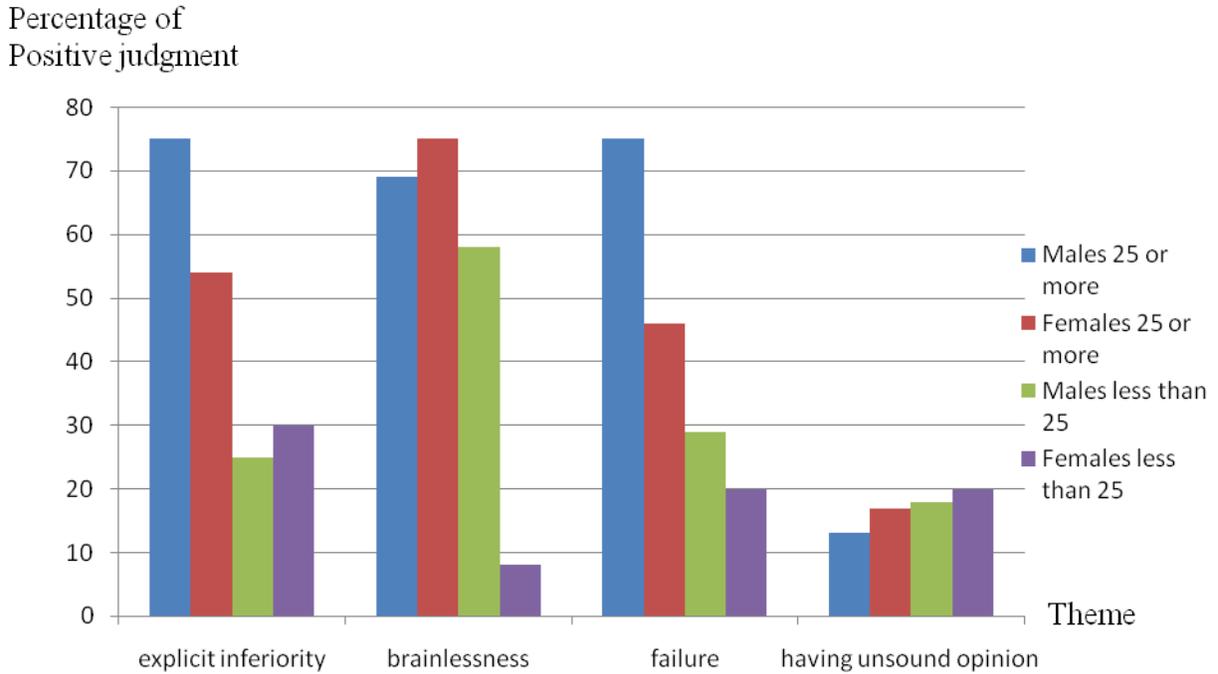


Figure C-2. Participants' interpretation of proverbs of inferiority

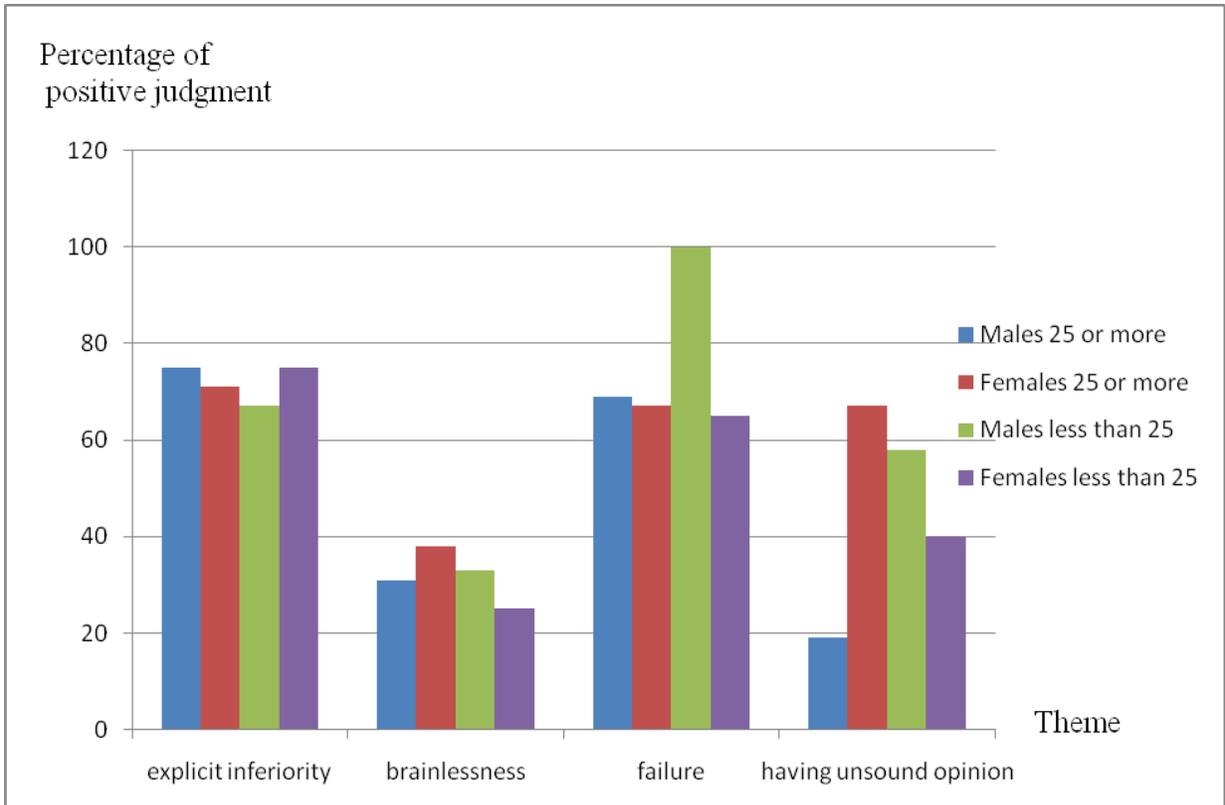


Figure C-3. Participants' judgment of the applicability of proverbs of inferiority to men

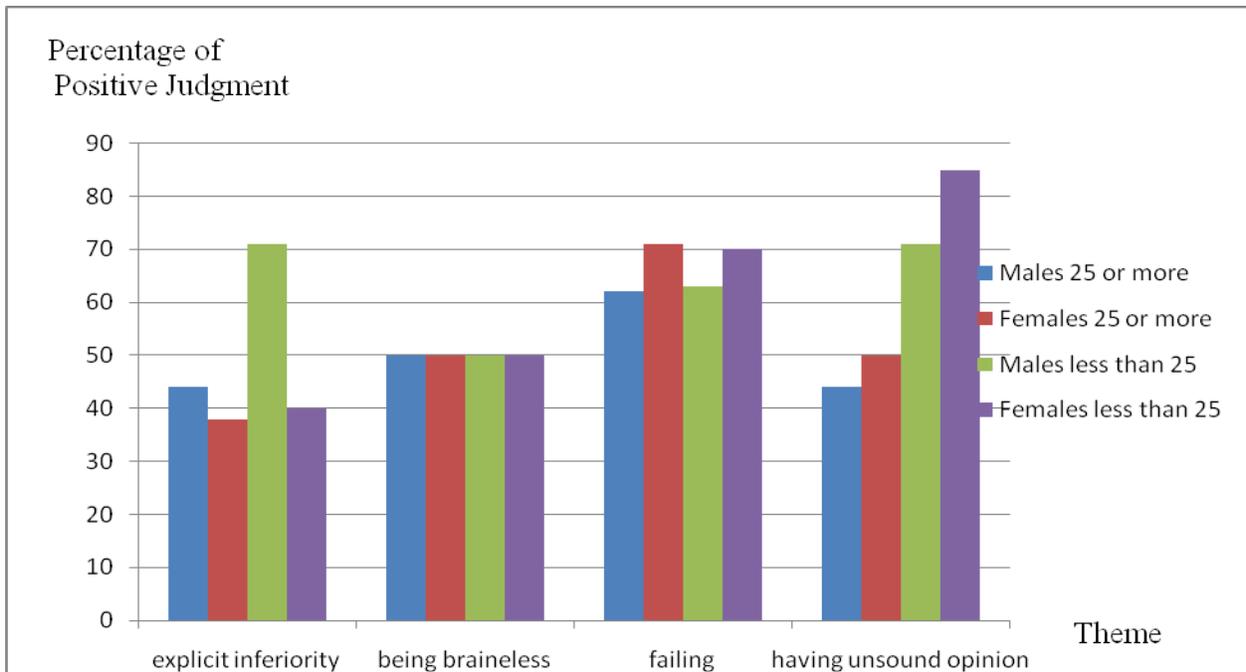


Figure C-4. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of inferiority to women in present-day Omani society

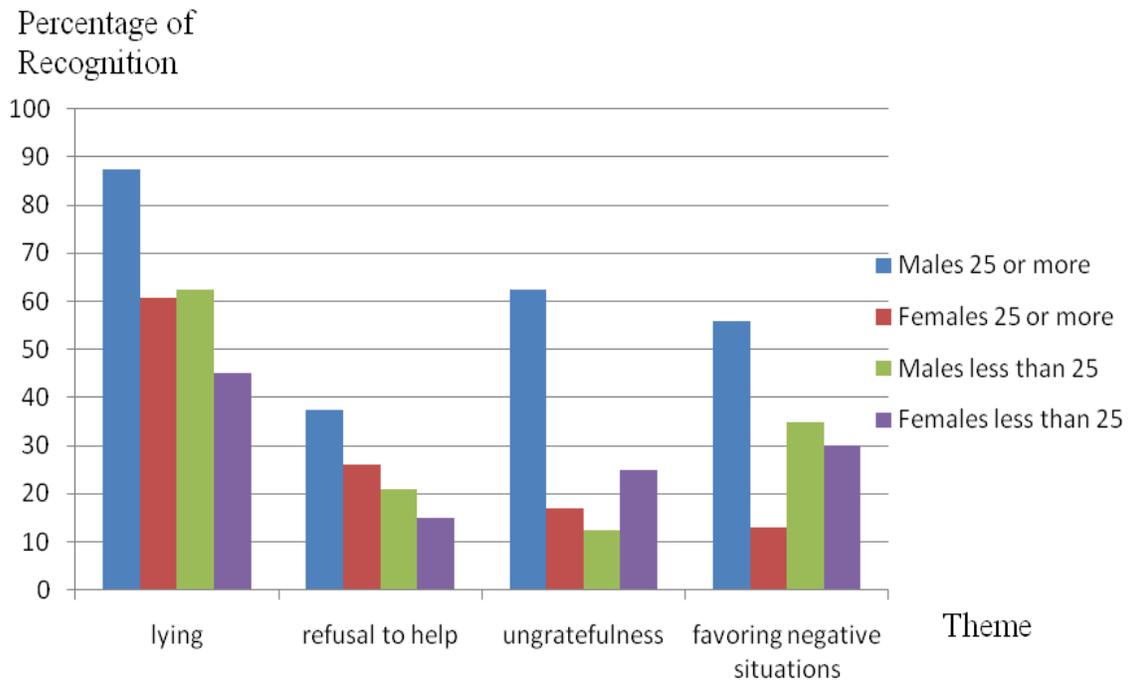


Figure C-5. Participants' recognition of proverbs of wickedness

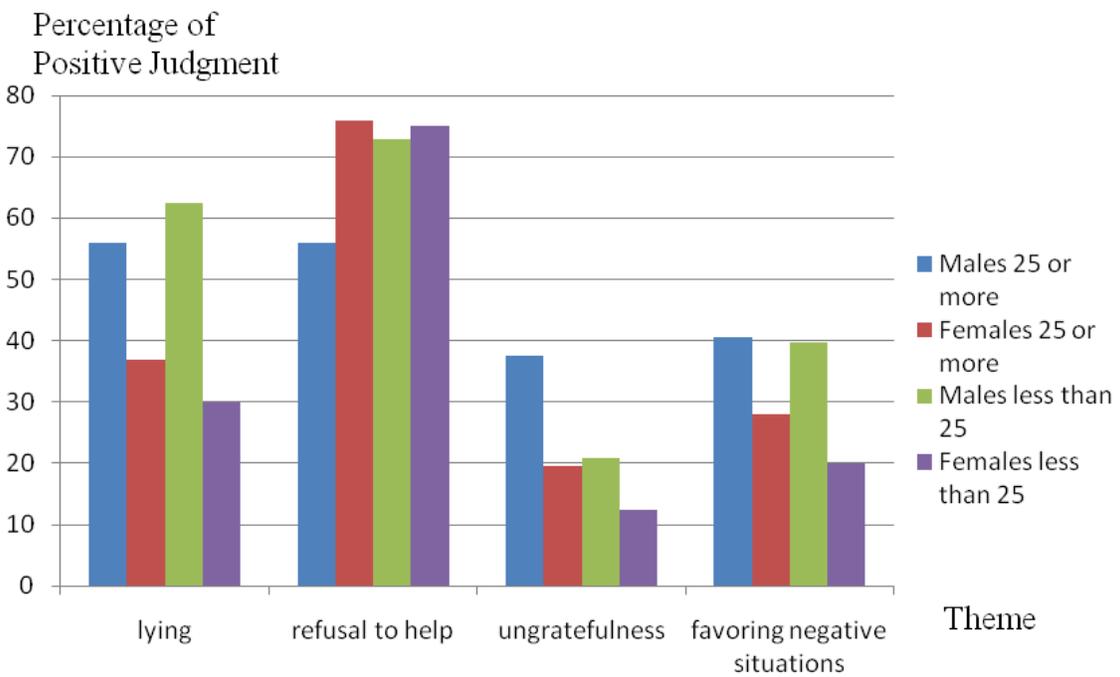


Figure C-6. Participants' interpretations of proverbs of wickedness

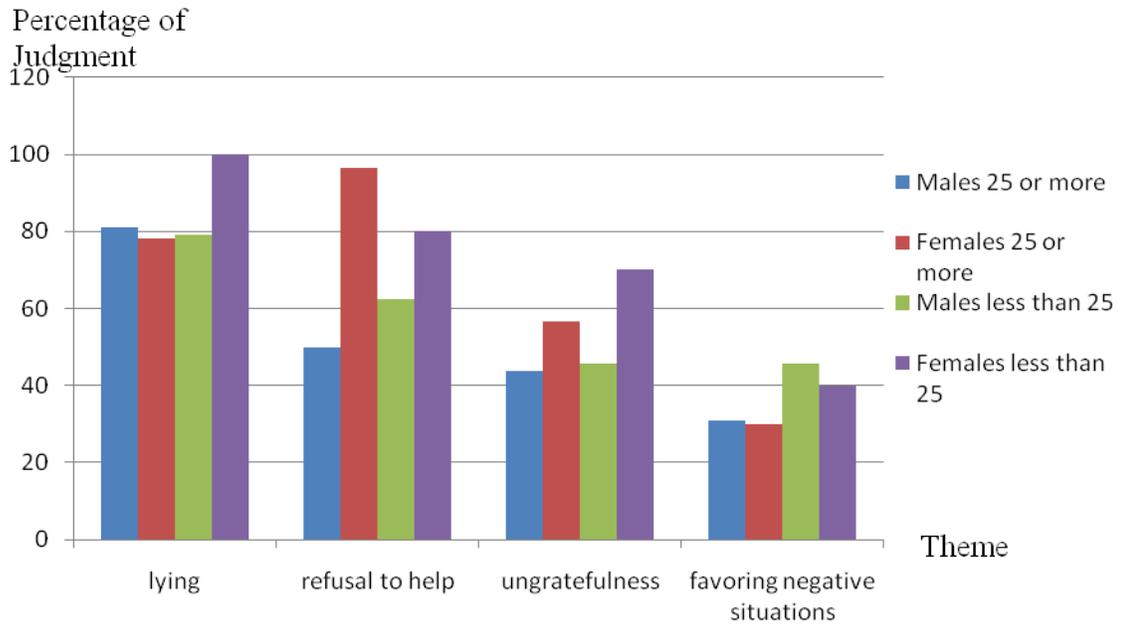


Figure C-7. Participants' Judgments of the Applicability of Proverbs of Wickedness to Men

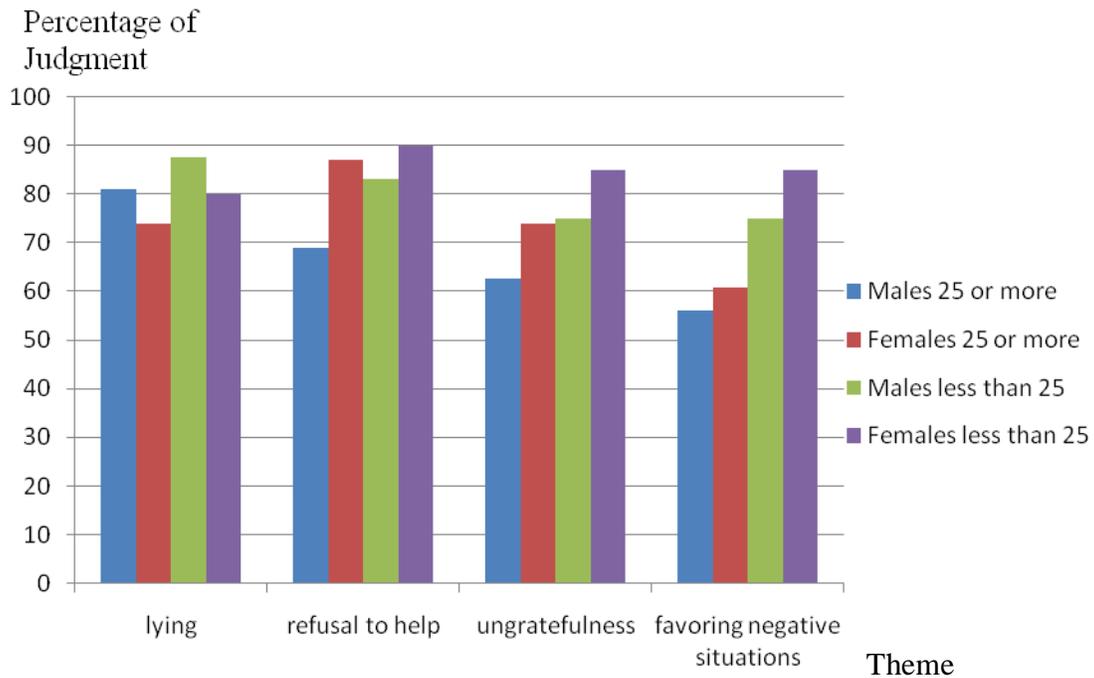


Figure C-8. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of wickedness to women in present-day Omani society

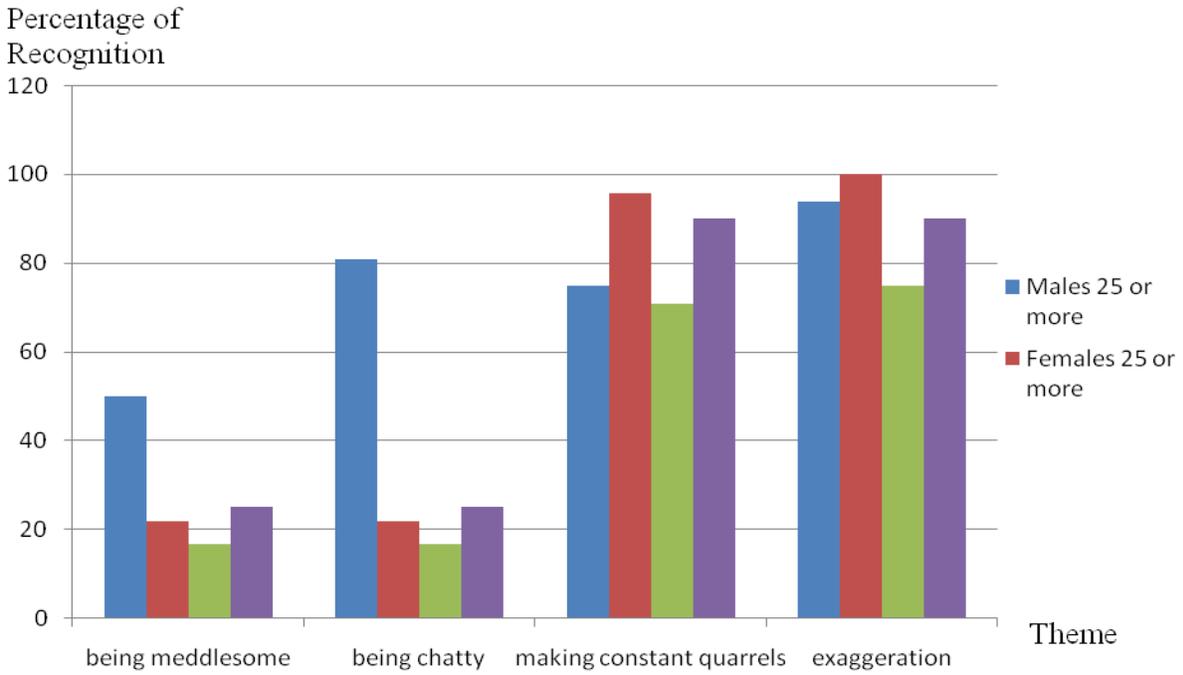


Figure C-9. Participants' recognition of proverbs of talkativeness

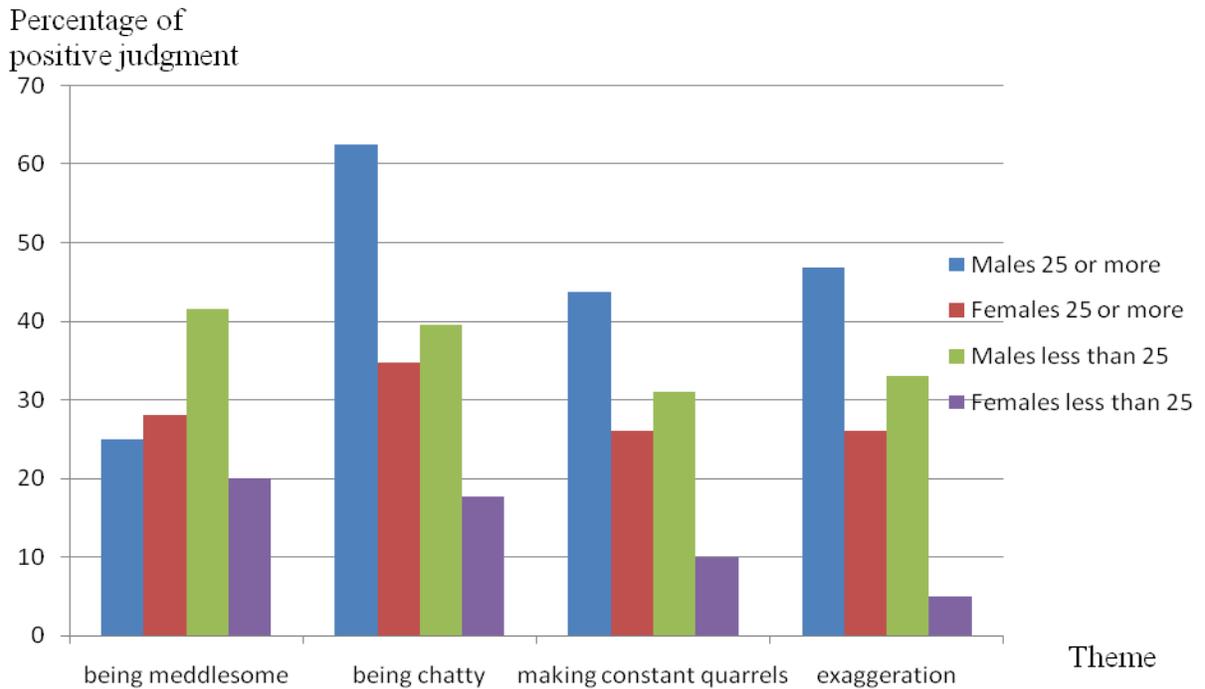


Figure C-10. Participants' interpretations of proverbs of talkativeness

Percentage of positive judgment

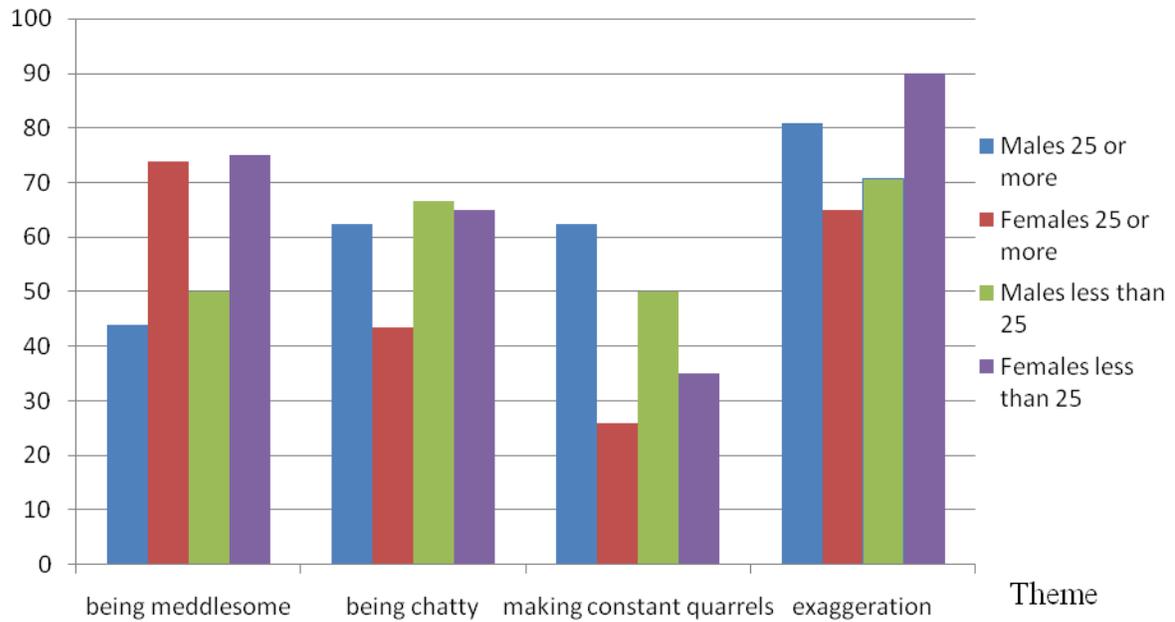


Figure C-11. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of talkativeness to men

Percentage of positive judgment

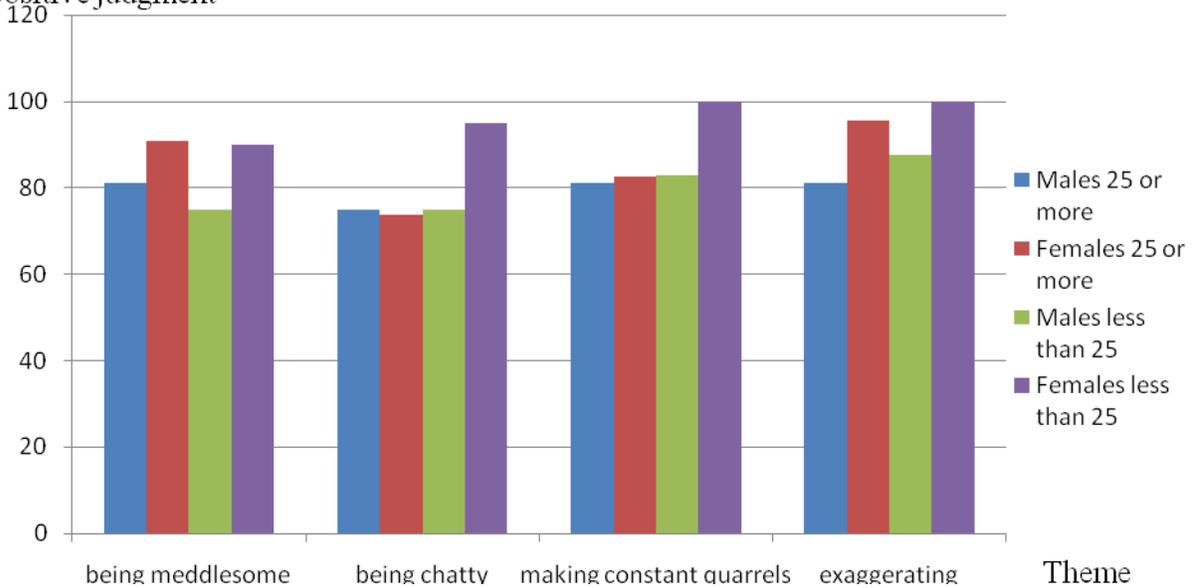


Figure C-12. Participants' judgments of the applicability of proverbs of talkativeness to women in present-day Omani society.

Percentage of Recognition

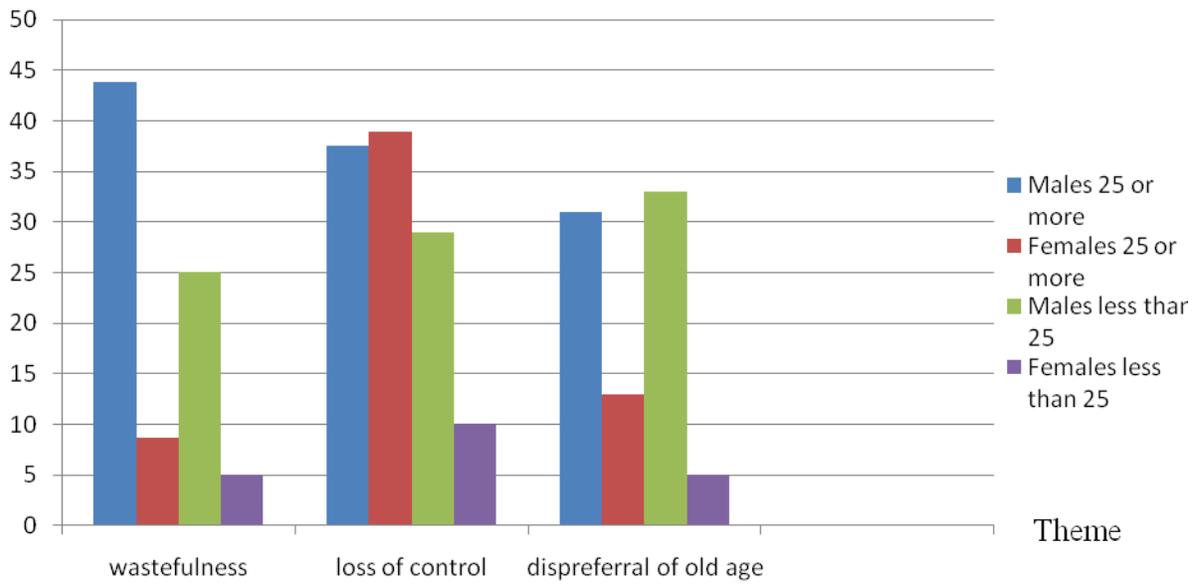


Figure C-13. Participants' recognition of more negative proverbs

Percentage of Positive Judgment

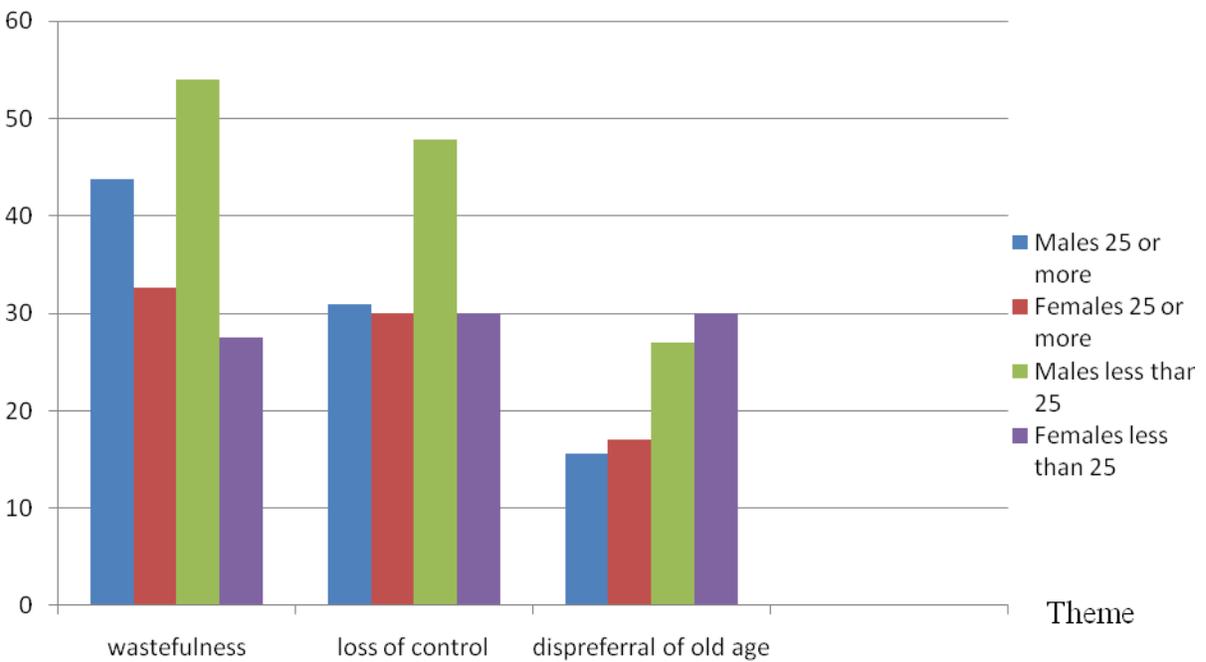


Figure C-14. Participants' interpretation of more negative proverbs

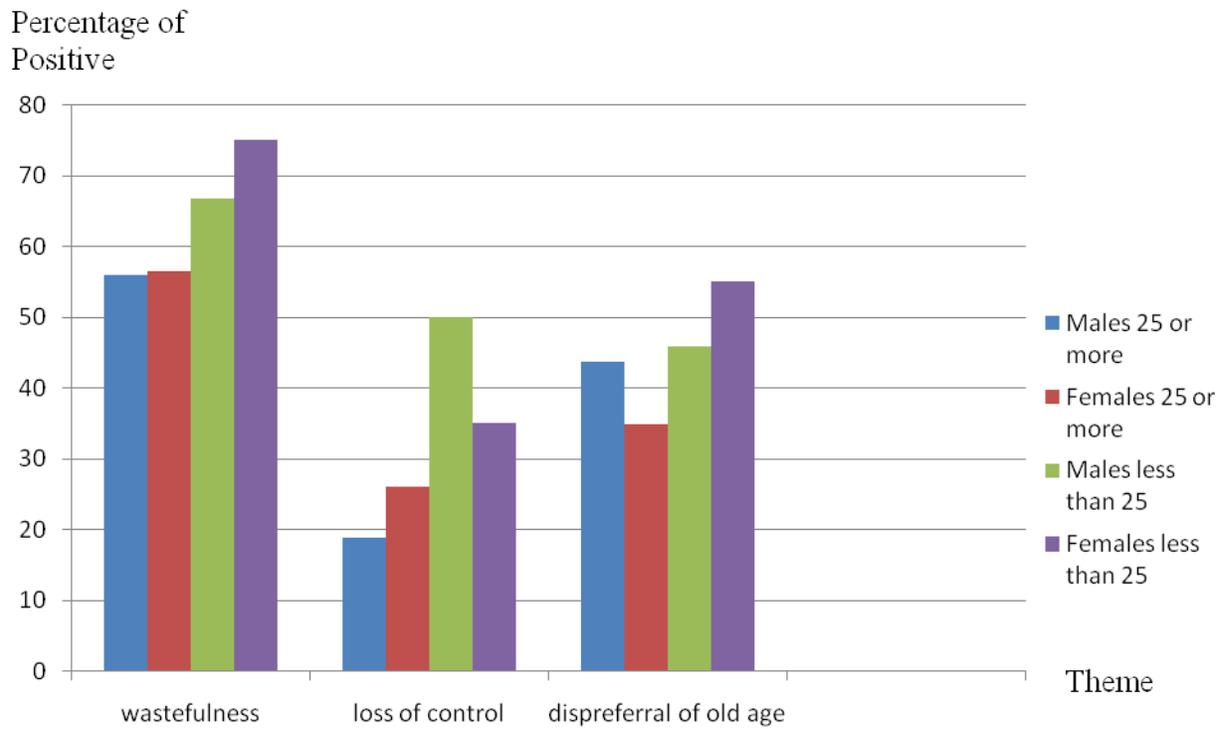


Figure C-15. Participants' judgments of the applicability of more negative proverbs to men

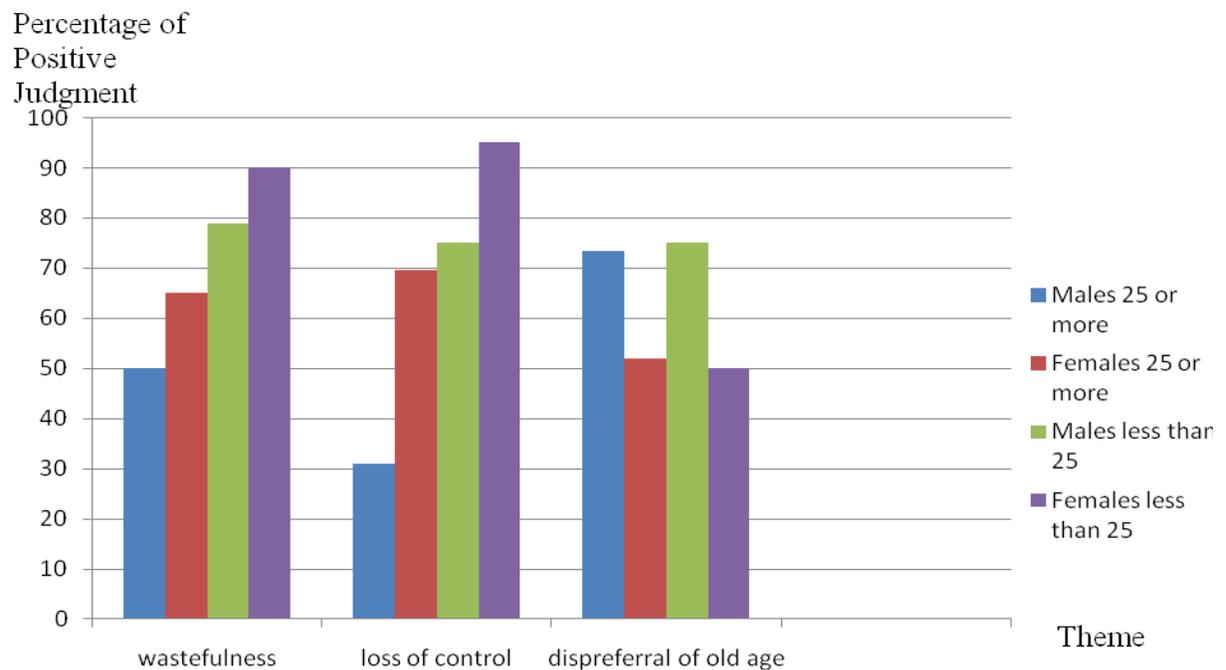


Figure C-16. Participants' judgment of the applicability of more negative proverbs to women in present-day Omani society

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Suaad Ambu-Saidi holds a Master of Arts in linguistics from the University of Florida. Soon after graduating from Sultan Qaboos University in August 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education/English Language, she assumed a position at SQU as a demonstrator. Two years later, she joined UF to pursue a Masters of Arts degree in linguistics. Her research interests include discourse analysis, gender and language, syntax, and morphology. This thesis is the culmination of her graduate work at the University of Florida.