

(Wo)Manhood and Gender Ideologies in Islamic Nuptial Sermons among Yoruba Muslims in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Islamic nuptial sermons (khutbatu al-nikah) among Yorùbá Muslims in southwestern Nigeria represent a distinctive hybrid genre in which Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith are interwoven with indigenous proverbial wisdom. Despite the centrality of these sermons to marital socialisation, their role in constructing gender ideologies remains critically underexamined. The research examines ten wedding sermons, of which six excerpts were derived (khutbatu al-nikah), performed from 2020 to 2025, with the aid of Fairclough's tripartite framework of Critical Discourse Analysis for analysing the construction and legitimisation of masculinities and femininities. Metaphor, modality, transitivity, and intertextuality are selected for analysis. The result shows that a discourse of negotiated patriarchy operates in which men's authority is presented as a holy amanah (trust) as opposed to dominance, while femininity is established through derivation, emotional labour, and obedience using the rhetoric of love and compassion. Although the occasional relativising of male privilege occurs, gender hierarchy persists since it is double legitimized.

Keywords: *Yorùbá Muslims, Khutbatu al-nikāh/Islamic nuptial sermons, Gender ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis*

Introduction

The Islamic nuptial sermon (khutbatu al-nikāh) among the Yoruba-speaking Muslims of Southwestern Nigeria is by no means a mere ritualistic exercise. It is a speech event where, in the name of the marital covenant, the sermon pronounces the moral foundation of marriage with all its attendant socio-moral obligations. In this context, gender is conceived not as a social construct open to bargaining but rather as a divine mandate that prescribes male behaviour as that of maintainer (qawwāmūn), provider, and custodian, while females are mandated to be submissive (mutī'āt) and peaceful emotional support. This is not to say that these gender definitions do not vary from situation to situation.

However, due to the important role played by marriage within Islamic social reproduction and the sermon's function as a discourse gatekeeping form which determines appropriate definitions of masculinities and femininities, the khutbatu al-nikāh in Yorùbá Nigeria has not received sufficient academic attention. Previous research on religion and gender in Nigeria has focused on Christianity – Pentecostal sermon rhetoric (Akinwotu, 2021), condolence message discourse (Ajayi & Akinrinlola, 2024), and discursive representation through mass media (Adebayo, 2017). Research on Islamic discourse has been preoccupied with political discourse, reformism, and, more recently, funeral sermons (Ajayi & Abubakar, 2025). No research work to date has attempted to explore gender ideology construction through marriage sermons. This is important for three reasons: first, marriage is the most important means of achieving gendered adulthood; second, the hyphenated nature of the Yorùbá Islamic discourse provides a singularly rich example of double legitimisation (Qur'anic and indigenously sourced); third, at a time when there is obvious conflict around gender roles in Nigerian society, knowledge of how religious figures reconcile tradition and innovation is crucial.

To analyse these processes, this study applies the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA begins with the assumption that discourse does not function merely as representational but as constitutive; in other words, discourse does not merely reflect social reality but produces and legitimates it (Fairclough, 1995). Being a kind of social practice, discourse serves as a means of negotiation of belief systems, maintenance of power relations and naturalisation of ideologies. This point can be illustrated most clearly by looking at religion as a particular social domain. The language of religion is sacred and not only communicative. Religious discourse categorises social relations, sanctions social hierarchies and defines social identities (Omoniyi, 2016). Worldview

becomes naturalised in discourse through the presentation of socially contingent relations as divinely sanctioned self-evident facts. This process has important implications in relation to gender issues since gender roles as male dominance and female subordination become naturalised through discourses on masculinity and femininity, leadership and caring roles.

The Southwest region of Nigeria, home to the Yorùbá ethnic group, provides an interesting location for studying these dynamics. In the past, the Yoruba society was patriarchal, as shown by the traditional saying “Okùnrin ni olórí ilé”, meaning that the man is the head of the family. This shows that male dominance was viewed as an act of nature rather than culture (Oduyoye, 1995; Oyewùmí, 1997). History shows that the spread of Islam among the Yoruba people began between the 14th and 15th centuries due to the trans-Saharan trade networks and contact with Hausa traders (Kane, 2003; Gbadamosi, 1978; Loimeier, 2013). In contrast to situations where Islam superseded the local tradition, the emergence of a unique Islamic-Yorùbá religious synthesis has resulted in the interpretation of Qur’anic doctrines through the prism of Yorùbá language. No example can demonstrate this better than the discourse of ceremonies – especially the Islamic marriage sermon. For the Muslims, the institution of marriage (nikāh) embodies both the covenant and contract aspects of a mithāq. The marriage sermon (khutbatu al-nikāh) becomes the space where this twofold nature of the institution manifests itself through discourse. Qur’anic verses, Prophetic traditions, and unique to the Yorùbá Muslims, indigenous proverbs all become part of the interpretive discourse. However, Blommaert (2010) warns that discourse is multilayered, with the speaker referencing multiple normative centres even when performing in a conservative register. The current conditions of educated women and economic empowerment bring about negotiations even in hierarchical discourse.

This study is driven by three research questions. Firstly, which linguistic devices (lexicalisation, metaphor, modality, and transitivity) do Yoruba Muslim men use in khutbatu al-nikāh sermons to construct their gender identities? Secondly, how does the preacher use the interplay of the Qur’anic verses, Hadiths, and Yoruba proverbs to generate power? Third, what gender relations model is created through this discourse approach, and how is hierarchy naturalised, mitigated, or contested? To answer these research questions, the current study makes use of Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis on a purposely selected corpus of ten khutbatu al-nikāh sermons performed between 2020 and 2025. The study analyses how Yoruba

Muslim imams linguistically construct masculinity and femininity, focusing not only on the reproduction of patriarchy but also on its mitigation and concession.

Utilising van Dijk's (1998, 2006) framework of the 'ideological square' and his socio-cognitive theory of discourse and manipulation, especially his discussion about how discourse influences the recipient's mind model by naturalizing power structures, we explore how hierarchy is moralized (responsibility instead of domination), romanticized (incorporated within the discourse of love and mercy), and naturalized (rooted in the mythic accounts of its divine creation). This research is an attempt to make contributions to three academic discourses: (a) the discourse analysis literature focusing on religion and gender issues, specifically outside Western societies; (b) the sociolinguistic analysis of Islam in Africa, which is poorly represented in contemporary discourse analysis literature; and (c) inter-disciplinary gender studies, by providing an empirical insight into how patriarchy is maintained through discourse in modern times despite women's resistance.

Literature Review

Religious sermons have undergone rigorous analysis from several perspectives about linguistic, pragmatic, and ideological aspects. In Nigeria, the predominant trend has been research on Christian denominations such as Pentecostal sermon rhetoric (Akinwotu, 2021) and condolences (Ajayi & Akinrinlola, 2024). Fewer efforts have been made to investigate the impact of sermons within the Islamic tradition concerning their effect on the social perception of gender issues. When discourses within Islam have been investigated, the emphasis has been put on politics and reforms, or on funeral services (Ajayi & Abubakar, 2025; Kane, 2003); there is practically no literature on nuptial sermons (*khutbatu al nikāh*), which is a neglected area despite the significance of the ceremony in question.

Islamic homiletic studies from an international perspective indicate that wedding sermons refer to such passages as Q. 4:1, Q. 4:21, and Q. 30:21, drawing attention to the religious, psychological, and sociological advantages of matrimony. Today's imams are confronted with the additional task of engaging with moral environments characterised by globalisation, including those regarding gender and women's issues (Stjernholm, 2020). Blommaert's (2010) idea of polycentricity can be used to analyse the preacher's ability to engage with the authority of scriptures, the Yorùbá culture, and modern gender sensitivities simultaneously. The result is a sermon that upholds hierarchy but also moderates and qualifies it.

The Qur’anic verses most frequently invoked in marital discourse, especially *Sūrat al-Nisā’* (4:34) and the creation narrative (4:1), have long been subject to interpretive contestation. A conservative interpretation of Q. 4:34 views the verse as establishing male guardianship (*qiwāmah*) based on ontological precedence and sustenance. Meanwhile, the Genesis account is viewed as establishing the female’s ontological dependence on and subordination to the male. Yet other interpretations reveal that such understandings are a product of patriarchal presuppositions rather than a necessary conclusion drawn from scripture. This study therefore examines which interpretive possibilities are activated and which are foreclosed in Yorùbá Islamic nuptial sermons.

Turning to the local context, Yorùbá social organisation traditionally privileged seniority and lineage over binary gender hierarchy (Oyèwùmí, 1997). Oyewù mí argues that “woman” as a subordinate identity was a colonial imposition, complicating any simple narrative of “Yorùbá patriarchy.” Nevertheless, as Oduyoye (1995) demonstrates, proverbs such as “*Okùnrin ni olóri ilé*” (the man is the head of the family) encode male headship as cultural common sense. The religion of Islam was established in Yorùbáland during the 14th to 15th centuries (Kane, 2003; Loimeier, 2013), bringing with it new discourses like that of *qawwāmūn* and *darajah*, concepts that fit into the preexisting logic of Yorùbá seniors and authorities. The Yorùbá people adopted the Islamic discourse selectively, using their local concepts to develop a syncretic religion (Opeloye, 2018). Syncretism is especially evident in marriage speeches, where Qur’anic texts are inserted into the proverbs of the Yorùbá people.

In addition, indigenous scholarship has also shed light on the disparity between the idealised conception of marriage in Islam and its contemporary manifestation among the Yorùbá people. Abubakar (2016) investigates the “missing links” between the marriage as envisioned by the Qur’an, which is founded on peace, compassion, and love (Q. 30:21), and the status of numerous Yorùbá marriages that are typified by discord and suspicion. This discrepancy highlights the need for researching the way sermonic speech acts reproduce, qualify, and naturalize gender ideologies. Likewise, the work of Oladosu-Uthman (2024) explores the gender dynamics in Islam, Vodun, and Sàngó religion in Yorùbáland and Lomé and demonstrates how patriarchal institutions use religion to suppress women. Faith-based toolkits developed for Nigerian religious leaders (Christian Aid, 2023) recognise the potential of sermons either to reproduce or challenge patriarchal norms on issues such as early marriage, girls’ education, and reproductive health, further highlighting the policy relevance of analysing nuptial discourse on gender.

Research into the discourse of Islam in Nigeria is not very well developed yet. However, Ajayi and Abubakar (2025) have studied the discourses used in funerals, proving that discourse analysis can be applied to the study of such discourses in Nigeria. Amzat (2020) shows that preachers may act as agents of either social reproduction or change, underscoring the importance of examining not merely whether religious discourse reproduces hierarchy. Despite these contributions, the *khutbatu al-nikāh* remains conspicuously absent from the literature.

Five gaps thus emerge. First, CDA has barely been applied to Nigerian Islamic contexts. Second, the *khutbatu al-nikāh* has received no sustained analysis as a distinct genre. Third, no study examines how Yorùbá preachers navigate contested Qur'anic interpretation in live performance. Fourth, the discursive mechanics of Qur'anic-Yorùbá fusion have gone unexamined. Fifth, empirical studies of Nigerian Islamic discourse have completely overlooked nuptial sermons. The present study fills these gaps by applying Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model to a purposively selected corpus of Yorùbá Islamic nuptial sermons, examining how manhood and womanhood are discursively constructed, legitimised, and – in limited ways negotiated.

Theoretical Orientation

This research is based on Critical Discourse Analysis, which asserts that discourse constructs society while at the same time being constructed by it (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Linguistic choices encode hierarchy, construct subject positions, and naturalize worldviews. Religious discourse is a dense site for such analysis because claims anchored in divine will "Allah says" resist contestation, presenting contingent gender arrangements as creational design. However, hegemony is never a total process; even conservative genres exhibit elements of negotiation (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's three-dimensional model organises analysis across three levels. The textual level examines lexicalisation ("protector," "source"), deontic modality ("must"), transitivity, metaphor, and presupposition as grammatical encodings of authority. The discursive practice level examines intertextuality incorporation of Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and Yorùbá proverbs and how preachers consolidate authority through strategic citation. The sociocultural practice level situates discourse within Yorùbá-Islamic patriarchy, examining naturalisation: rendering contingent arrangements self-evident, timeless, and divinely mandated. van Dijk's (1998, 2006) ideological square provides analytic precision for representational asymmetries through four moves: emphasize positive ingroup/negative outgroup characteristics; de-emphasise negative ingroup/positive outgroup characteristics. Here, the square illuminates how

male authority is framed positively (responsibility, provision) while its coercive potential is backgrounded; female obedience is foregrounded as virtue while alternative subject positions are unavailable. Hierarchy is thus moralized: male dominance becomes duty; female subordination becomes virtue. Beyond the square, van Dijk (2006) offers a socio-cognitive theory of manipulation: dominant groups shape recipients' *mental models*, the knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies guiding social interpretation. The preacher's declarative tone, deontic modality ("must know"), and lack of politeness strategies are manipulation devices that influence listeners' mental models of marriage and authority, presenting dependence as divinely ordained.

Negotiated patriarchy, this study's central concept, names a discursive formation wherein gender hierarchy is moralised as sacred trust (*amānah*), romanticized through love (*mahabbah*) and mercy (*rahmah*), naturalised through origin narratives, and qualified through disavowals of tyranny while structural asymmetry remains intact. It is discursive accommodation: absorbing contemporary pressures by softening hierarchy's presentation while preserving its substance. The concept resonates with Blommaert's (2010) polycentricity: preachers orient to classical exegesis, contemporary sensibilities, and local expectations simultaneously. We approach *khutbatu al-nikāh* as a site of ideological production, making visible the linguistic infrastructure upon which marital patriarchy rests.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, framed within the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. The research is not just interested in identifying what is said in Islamic nuptial sermons among the Yoruba; instead, it seeks to critically examine linguistic actions that construct, legitimise, and naturalise gender positions and the ideological orientations on which these actions were made. A purposive sample of ten sermons delivered between 2020–2025 was drawn from Southwestern Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti States). Inclusion criteria were: (1) delivery during formal nikāḥ ceremony; (2) explicit reference to Qur'anic verses or Ḥadīth on marriage/gender; (3) identifiable Yorùbá linguistic features (though rendered in English); and (4) complete audio/video recording permitting verbatim transcription. Of thirty sermons initially identified through consultation with Muslim communities (the mosque and gatherings), ten sermons were selected to maximise variation in geographic setting (urban, semi-urban, rural). In qualitative CDA, sample size is determined by informational adequacy, rather than statistical representativeness (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). The ten sermons of between 15 and 30 minutes each yield

substantial data for analysis, which concurs with comparable Nigerian studies (Akinwotu, 2021; Ajayi & Abubakar, 2025).

The data were live audio recordings and stored audio recordings retrieved from mosque stores and Muslim community members. The sermons were anonymised; no personal details were kept. One of the researchers transcribed the sermons verbatim in the original language (English), including pauses and emphasis, code-switching, and quotations of the Qur'an. For analysis, the researchers operationalised Fairclough's (1995) model of the three-dimensional nature of discourse, accomplished at five different levels: Holistic familiarisation: listening to the original language of the sermons and reading translations, and developing analytic memos to determine recurring themes (Level 1); Textual analysis: microanalysis of linguistic features such as lexicalisation, deontic modality, transitivity, metaphor, and presupposition, content constituting the grammatical features of authority and dependency (Level 2); Discursive practice: investigation of intertextuality (which Qur'anic verses were used and which were not), interdiscursivity (elements of Islam and Yoruba), generic structure, and code-switching features (Level 3); Sociocultural practice: investigation of language in relation to Yoruba and Islamic patriarchy, focusing on naturalisation, legitimisation strategies, manipulation of mental models (van Dijk, 2006) – that is, how sermon discourse shapes recipients' cognitive frameworks to naturalise power relations – and negotiation (Level 4); Integration and synthesis: investigation of the relationships between the different levels of discourse (Level 5).

Ethical considerations were observed: obtaining consent to use live recordings; anonymisation of all data; a non-evaluative approach to the preachers as individuals (our focus is on discourse patterns, not moral judgement); clear differentiation between scripture and its use; and community engagement in which early results were shared with Islamic intellectuals and laypersons in Ibadan to polish our analysis.

Data Analysis

Man as the source and origin of humanity

Across the ten sermons, manhood is constructed as ontologically primary, the source of womanhood anchored in Q. 4:1 (creation from a single soul) and Q. 4:34 (men as *qawwāmūn*). Preachers invoke these verses not to emphasise shared humanity but to establish male precedence, recontextualising them through Yoruba formulations: “*òkùnrin ni olóri ilé tí Ọlòhun fì ojùṣe idílẹ̀ lẹ̀ lówó*” (the man is the head of the home entrusted by God). Lexically, “olóri” (head) and “ojùṣe”

(responsibility), along with metaphors such as “pillar,” encode hierarchy through functional language rather than overt dominance. Authority is framed as obligation and burden, shifting male superiority into moral accountability. Modality further naturalises this construction: men *must* lead, provide, and protect, presenting leadership as a divinely mandated duty, not negotiable role. Thus, hierarchy is softened but preserved.

We turn to the excerpt below for discussion:

Excerpt 1: “...Any woman who has gotten married and has become a wife must know that her husband is her source and she’s created from a part of him...”

Excerpt 1 constructs manhood as ontologically primary and divinely authorised within marriage. Through a narrative of origin that positions women as created “from” man, the sermon recontextualises Qur’anic cosmology into a hierarchical marital order. Rather than overtly asserting dominance, the discourse naturalises male authority by embedding it in theology and cultural common sense. As van Dijk (1998) argues, ideology is most effective when presented as self-evident truth rather than social construction. Here, male centrality is elevated to divine order, insulating it from contestation. The metaphor of “source” performs crucial ideological work. By positioning man as origin and sustaining force, the discourse constructs woman as derivative and relational rather than autonomous. This metaphor encodes asymmetry while appearing descriptive. Hierarchy is thus embedded semantically rather than declared explicitly.

Modality further reinforces authority. The expression “must know” functions as deontic compulsion, foreclosing interpretive flexibility and framing submission as obligation rather than choice. Fairclough (1995) notes that institutional religious discourse often operates through assumed authority rather than negotiated meaning. In this case, the prescriptive tone establishes epistemic control: the preacher speaks as custodian of divine knowledge, while women are positioned as recipients of that knowledge. Such control over “mental models,” as van Dijk (2006) suggests, enables dominant groups to shape how subordinate groups interpret social reality. Notably, the utterance lacks mitigating politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that direct impositions typically threaten negative face; however, in contexts of unequal power, such threats are normalised. Here, religious authority substitutes for interpersonal negotiation, allowing directive force to appear as moral guidance rather than coercion. The phrase “any woman who has gotten married” operates as a generalising device that erases individual variation and constructs wifehood as a standardised identity. van Dijk (2001) identifies such generalisation as a

common ideological strategy that suppresses agency and context. Through this linguistic move, dependency becomes a universal expectation attached to marriage itself.

Pragmatically, the statement functions as a directive speech act. While framed as instruction, its perlocutionary effect is the internalisation of subordination. In Austin's (1962) sense, the utterance is performative: it does not merely describe marital hierarchy but enacts it by establishing normative expectations. Repetition of the husband as "source" stabilises this hierarchy within lived marital consciousness. Culturally, the discourse resonates with Yoruba patriarchal structures in which lineage and male headship are historically valorised. As Oyewumi (1997) observes, African gender systems often intertwine cosmology, kinship, and authority, rendering male dominance culturally intelligible. When Islamic theology converges with Yoruba social norms, the result is a doubly legitimised discourse: hierarchy appears both divinely sanctioned and culturally authentic. In sum, Excerpt 1 exemplifies how ideology operates discursively. Through metaphor, modality, generalisation, and performative force, gender hierarchy is rendered moral, spiritual, and natural rather than political, a process consistent with van Dijk's understanding of ideological reproduction through language.

Excerpt 2: *"...Allah says men should get married to women in His words and that He created us and created those we married, which are our wives from our ribs or our part of the body..."*

In Excerpt 2, the claim that Allah created wives from men's ribs constructs manhood as ontologically prior and divinely authorised within marriage. Male authority is not presented as a social arrangement but as a sacred origin. Through van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, this formulation can be read as ideological practice: gender hierarchy is institutionalised by grounding it in divine authorship. The invocation "Allah says" functions rhetorically to foreclose contestation, relocating authority to an unquestionable source. As van Dijk (1998) argues, ideology is most powerful when anchored in external, sacred legitimacy. By mobilising Qur'anic imagery of women as derived from men, the sermon transforms social asymmetry into theological necessity.

The declarative tone further consolidates epistemic authority. The statement is delivered as revealed truth rather than an interpretive position; there is no modality signalling uncertainty or dialogic openness. Fairclough (1995) notes that institutional religious discourse typically assumes, rather than negotiates, moral authority. Here, assertiveness operates as epistemic control, positioning the preacher as mediator of divine knowledge and the audience, especially women as

recipients. The absence of politeness strategies reinforces unequal power distance, as the utterance instructs belief rather than invites agreement.

In van Dijk's (2006) terms, such discourse influences "mental models," guiding how listeners interpret gender relations. The message resonates with Yoruba patriarchal norms that valorise male headship and lineage continuity, thereby reinforcing existing structures with religious validation (Oyewumi, 1997). Through sacred narrative, declarative authority, and cultural resonance, the excerpt discursively produces manhood as origin and epistemic centre of marriage, naturalising male dominance and rendering female dependency both divinely ordained and culturally intelligible.

Men as Moral Leaders and Custodians of the Family

Across the sermons, men are constructed as the moral and spiritual compass of the household, responsible not only for provision but for ethical direction. This representation draws on Qur'anic injunctions, particularly Suratul Nisah (4:34), where men are described as *qawwamun* (maintainers/guardians). In Yoruba Islamic discourse, this is rendered in culturally resonant terms: "*òkùnrin ni olórí ilé, ṣùgbón kì í ṣe olórí ika*" (the man is the head of the house, but not a tyrant). The qualification is significant. Leadership is affirmed, yet explicitly detached from cruelty, reframing hierarchy as disciplined stewardship rather than domination.

Moral headship is linguistically tied to character (*ìwà rere*), patience, and emotional restraint Quran 32:24, 3:134. Preachers foreground anger, harsh speech, and neglect as threats to marital stability, echoing Qur'anic exhortations to live with wives in kindness (*ma'ruf*) (Suratul Nisah 4:19). Expressions such as "*òkùnrin rere ni ẹnì tó fì iwàpèlẹ́ dárí ilé rẹ́*" (a good man leads his home with gentleness) embed authority within affective ethics. Through such lexical choices, masculinity is moralised: power is legitimate only when tempered by self-control.

Excerpt 3: "...*The bride's parent returns the bride price to her husband's family, stating that they are not selling their daughter. It's not the right of the bride's parent to collect her Mahr (dowry).*"...

The excerpt above foregrounds the return of the bride price by the bride's parents, who insist they are "not selling" their daughter. By declaring that the bride's parents have no right to collect the *mahr*, the sermon establishes a moral boundary within marital transactions and positions the groom, and by extension men, as legitimate moral agents. What is framed as "not right" becomes

a discursive mechanism for defining proper conduct. As van Dijk (1998) observes, ideological discourse operates through moralisation, distinguishing acceptable from deviant practices to stabilise group norms. Here, returning the bride price is elevated as moral integrity rather than mere custom.

The categorical denial of parental entitlement is delivered without mitigation, reflecting the authoritative register typical of religious discourse, where legitimacy derives from divine law rather than interpersonal negotiation (Fairclough, 1995). The low use of politeness strategies reinforces this asymmetry: the issue is presented as doctrinal certainty, not open to debate. Pragmatically, the excerpt harmonises Islamic injunction with Yoruba ethical tradition. The customary act of returning *owo orí iyàwó* (among some Yoruba) is rearticulated as alignment with prophetic precedent, thereby intensifying its legitimacy. Such convergence between religious doctrine and shared cultural knowledge strengthens ideological internalisation (van Dijk, 2006). While the sermon symbolically affirms women's dignity by rejecting commodification, it simultaneously consolidates male custodianship. Moral leadership in marital transactions is vested in men, who are constructed as guardians of integrity. Thus, even as the discourse protects women from symbolic sale, it reaffirms patriarchal authority by centring men as custodians of marital morality.

Men as the provider (Ólùpèsè)

In Islamic nuptial sermons among the Yoruba, manhood is centrally constructed around economic provision, encapsulated in the term *ólùpèsè* (provider). Financial responsibility is framed not merely as social expectation but as religious obligation grounded in Qur'anic authority. Suratul Nisah (4:34) designates men as maintainers of women "because they spend out of their wealth," a verse frequently invoked to anchor provision as a defining masculine duty.

This mandate is reinforced through culturally resonant metaphors: "*òkùnrin ni òpó ilé; tí ó kùnà láti ɛe ojùɛ, ilé a dàrú*" (the man is the pillar of the house; if he fails in his duty, the house collapses). Provision is thus constructed as structural stability. Failure to provide threatens not only domestic comfort but moral order. Culturally, a man who neglects provision is labelled "*òkùnrin tó kùnà nínú ojùɛ rẹ*" (a man who has failed in his responsibility), regardless of status. Marriage is thus discursively framed as intensifying, not diminishing, male accountability. Importantly, sermons caution against converting provision into domination. Suratul Talaq (65:7) is cited to stress fairness and compassion, echoed in the warning: "*ó yẹ kí o pèsè fún iyàwó rẹ, kì í ɛe kó fí*

owó ní lára” (provide for your wife, not oppress her with money). Provision emerges as a spiritual obligation and moral performance of masculinity.

Excerpt 4:

“...Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given them more strength and because they have the primary responsibility of family maintenance...”

Within Islamic nuptial discourse among the Yoruba, the excerpt constructs men as primary economic and physical providers, echoing the Qur’anic declaration that “men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given them more strength and because they bear the responsibility of sustaining the family.” Male authority and financial obligation are thus grounded in divine endowment. By invoking God as the source of male capacity, the sermon frames hierarchy as sacred mandate rather than social arrangement. Such ideological grounding aligns power with moral and religious legitimacy, thereby stabilising marital norms (van Dijk, 1998). The tone is prescriptive and declarative, offering clear directives on gendered responsibilities. The repeated use of causal connectors such as “because” explicitly links divine will to social structure, naturalising male custodianship as logical consequence of theological order. The sermon therefore performs both instructive and legitimising functions: it not only outlines gender roles but sanctifies male guardianship as a religious duty. As van Dijk (2006) notes, discourse becomes particularly effective when it fuses cultural knowledge with sacred authority, enhancing ideological adherence. Culturally, the message resonates with Yoruba and Islamic expectations that men provide materially and ensure physical security. While women are affirmed as valued members of the household, they are positioned primarily as recipients of protection and care, reflecting a complementary gender ideology. The discourse thus promotes family stability while simultaneously consolidating male dominance, illustrating how religious and cultural narratives converge to reproduce patriarchal norms within Yoruba Muslim marriage.

Woman as Derivative and Dependent

Having examined how manhood is constructed through the lexical fields of origin, authority, and provision, this section turns to the corresponding construction of womanhood across the corpus. In the ten sermons analysed, womanhood is consistently framed through two interrelated discursive strategies: derivation (woman created from man) and dependence (woman's identity defined relationally through husband). These constructions are anchored in the Qur'anic creation

narrative (Sūrat al-Nisā' 4:1), which states that humanity was created from a single soul and its mate from it. Preachers routinely cite this verse not to emphasise shared origin but to establish male ontological priority and female derivation. Additionally, Yorùbá cultural wisdom is selectively invoked to soften dependency as complementarity rather than inferiority, while still preserving structural asymmetry. The following excerpt exemplifies how these theological and cultural resources are mobilised linguistically.

Excerpt 5:

"...Any woman who has gotten married and has become a wife must know that her husband is her source and she's created from a part of him. Almighty Allah said that there are two things between the husband and the wife, which are love and mercy. Those two phrases are what make marriage strong. In marriage, when there's no love and mercy, then the husband and wife are no longer married; they are just deceiving themselves because the essence of their marriage is already defeated..."

The excerpt constructs womanhood in (Islamic) marriage as relationally dependent and ontologically derivative. By asserting that a woman is created from a portion of her husband, the sermon invokes the Qur'anic creation narrative while reinterpreting it in ways that foreground male centrality. What appears as a theological explanation function ideologically: social hierarchy is presented as divinely ordained rather than historically produced. As van Dijk (1998) argues, such narratives naturalise power by embedding it within sacred origins, rendering hierarchy resistant to critique. Male precedence is thus framed not as argument but as theological reality. The address to women is straightforward and instructive, positioning them as recipients of revealed knowledge rather than co-constructors of meaning. Politeness strategies are minimal; the tone is paternalistic, and directives are framed as moral guidance. Assertions such as "a marriage without love and mercy is not a marriage" define legitimacy in categorical terms, narrowing interpretive space. Through presupposition, the sermon assumes that dependence on the husband is spiritually appropriate and that female identity is fulfilled within marriage. Couples lacking love and mercy are depicted as morally deficient, reinforcing normative expectations through moral judgment rather than explicit coercion—an instance of what van Dijk (2006) describes as the shaping of social cognition.

Discourse markers such as "must know," "Almighty Allah said," and "because" create a causal chain linking divine authority to social order. This rhetorical structure reduces ambiguity and

discourages alternative readings of the Qur'an that emphasise reciprocity rather than derivation. Culturally, the sermon resonates with Yoruba patriarchal categories in which the husband is *olóri ilé* (head of the home) and the wife's identity is linguistically relational. The insertion of origin imagery (*orísun*) consolidates male precedence, positioning womanhood as supported and defined through attachment. At the same time, the hierarchy is softened through appeals to love (*ifé*) and mercy (*aánú*). This configuration aligns with what feminist scholars describe as benevolent patriarchy (Johri, 2023). van Dijk (2006) notes that ideology often couples inequality with moral justification, making asymmetry appear virtuous. Here, marriage without love is spiritually void, yet the premise of male origin remains intact, implying that female fulfilment is contingent upon sustained attachment to male authority. Scholars such as Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) argue that such readings reflect cultural interpretation rather than the Qur'an's broader ethic of mutuality. In this sermon, hierarchy precedes harmony; equality is secondary to male-centred origin narratives. Through religious language, cultural resonance, and implicit power assumptions, womanhood is constructed as relational and submissive. CDA, following van Dijk, illuminates how such discourse reproduces gender privilege under the guise of divine truth, moral care, and spiritual legitimacy.

Woman as restricted and submissive

This perception has generally been based on Qur'anic injunctions on matrimonial order, particularly (Suratul Nisa 4:34), which attributes leadership roles in the family set-up. Sermons tend to understand this verse as meaning that wives should be submissive and obedient to their husbands to ensure peace at home. Some interpretations of sermons put an accent on movement, speech, and decision-making restriction as an indication of ideal womanhood. This expectation of limited behaviour is supported with the help of Yoruba phrases such as "*Ìyàwó rere mó àyè rẹ*" (a good wife knows her limits). In Yoruba Islamic culture, restriction is frequently introduced as a moral discipline and not punishment. The obedient woman is complimented as a stabilising power in the marriage, though such a framing can be oppressive to women when uncritically accepted.

Excerpt 6:

"...When Adam saw her, he immediately felt attraction and connection towards her. This natural attraction between man and woman is God-given. Allah (SWT) decreed and created compassion and love between spouses at the dawn of human existence. Allah (SWT) says, 'And one of His Signs

is that He created for you spouses from amongst yourselves so that you may find comfort in them, and He has placed between you compassion and mercy in this; surely in this are signs for people who reflect.' In this verse, God Almighty attributes the institution of Nikah as one of His signs, showing that the wife's role includes submission within a framework of love, mercy, and tranquillity..."

Excerpt 6 constructs womanhood in marriage as relational, affective, and implicitly oriented toward submission. Rather than framing obedience explicitly, the sermon situates the woman as the locus of male comfort, emotional fulfilment, and tranquillity. The cited Qur'anic verse: And one of His Signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find comfort in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy" anchors this construction in divine ordinance. Marriage is thus presented as a sacred design structured around love and mercy, yet articulated within a gendered order that subtly privileges male centrality. By invoking the creation narrative of Adam and attributing its claims directly to the Qur'an, the sermon grounds its interpretation in sacred authority rather than opinion. As van Dijk (1998) notes, ideology is most potent when embedded in taken-for-granted narratives. Here, hierarchy is not argued; it emerges as a logical extension of divine intention. The tone is gentle and affective rather than overtly coercive. This softness performs ideological work: power asymmetry is obscured through compassion. Politeness strategies foreground emotional harmony instead of command, allowing hierarchical roles to appear nurturing rather than restrictive.

Submission is never directly demanded. Instead, the sermon constructs a moral universe in which it becomes inherent in divine love. Restriction is normalised by embedding it within positive emotional values. van Dijk (2006) describes such indirectness as characteristic of ideological discourse that achieves compliance without confrontation. Discourse markers such as "Allah decreed," "one of His Signs," and "so that you may find comfort" guide interpretation toward a predetermined conclusion: gender roles are divinely constructed and fixed. The repeated causal structures ("so that," "because") link creation to social arrangement, narrowing space for alternative readings emphasising reciprocity. Notably, tranquillity is framed as something the man finds in the woman, rather than a jointly produced state. The wife becomes *olùtúnú*, the bringer of calm (comforter), aligning with Yoruba ideals of femininity associated with *ìfaradà* (patience), *ìrèlẹ̀* (humility), and *ìgbọ̀ràn* (submission) (Oyewumi, 1997). Cultural resonance strengthens

acceptance: Qur'anic language converges with local patriarchal values, enhancing emotional and social legitimacy.

Ideologically, this configuration reflects what feminist scholars term romanticised submission (see Meeker et al., 2019; Garcia, 2021). Compassion and mercy soften, but do not dismantle, asymmetry. Through what van Dijk's ideological square would identify as emphasis on positive relational virtues and de-emphasis of structural power, male authority is backgrounded while female compliance is reframed as loving cooperation. Scholars such as Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) argue that Qur'anic love and mercy are reciprocal, not hierarchical. The sermon, however, selectively foregrounds meanings that reinforce patriarchal order, presenting them as fulfilment of divine design. This process exemplifies what Fairclough (1995) describes as the naturalisation of ideology through discourse: hierarchy becomes moralised, spiritualised, and rendered commonsensical within the language of love.

Woman as emotional and patient

Patience is a moral virtue that is rewarded by Allah (Suratul Zumar 39:10), and sermons tend to relate the virtue closely with the female gender when in marriage. This expectation is reflected in the Yoruba saying, "*Sùúrù obìnrin ní ọ̀ṣọ́ ilẹ̀*" (a woman's patience is the beauty of the home). Emotional expression is not denied patience, yet is the way to react to the marriage problems. This portrayal portrays women as emotional support systems whose stability holds the family together. Although it takes into consideration the strength of women, it also leaves an excessive burden on women to take the strain of marriage.

Excerpt 7: "...how women support the home with dignity and cooperation, how they should maintain faith, modesty and good character. Women are expected to treat their husbands with respect and kindness, to avoid belittling them, undermining him or speaking to him harshly. They are the source of comfort and tranquillity for the family, maintaining the sanctity of the home. Islam does not expect women to be slaves, overworked or oppressed, but sets balanced mutual rights like love, respect, communication, and privacy..."

The excerpt constructs womanhood in marriage as emotionally centered, ethically regulated, and socially harmonising. Women are portrayed as dignified homemakers: cooperative, modest, religious, and respectful, whose conduct must avoid harsh speech or actions that might destabilise male authority. At the same time, the discourse explicitly rejects the claim that Islam reduces

women to slavery or oppression. Instead, it foregrounds reciprocity through love, respect, communication, and privacy. This dual framing elevates women morally while confining them within a narrowly defined emotional and relational sphere. The preacher adopts a justificatory tone that anticipates criticism, particularly feminist objections to conservative gender roles. By clarifying that Islam does not demand that women become enslaved or overburdened, the sermon presents gender hierarchy as humane and balanced. van Dijk (1998) notes that such defensive rhetoric typifies ideological discourse: dominant structures are preserved by being framed as fair and benevolent. Emotional labour is thus spiritualised and dignified, obscuring asymmetrical expectations. What appears as moral elevation simultaneously reinforces role limitation.

Politeness strategies are central to this construction of womanhood. Women are urged not to belittle, undermine, or speak harshly to their husbands. These forms of negative politeness position women as primary regulators of emotional tone within marriage. The burden of harmony falls disproportionately on them; they must manage not only their own emotions but also the affective climate of the household. In Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, such patterns signal unequal power relations, as the less powerful party expends greater effort in face maintenance and relational repair. Although the preacher avoids explicit commands such as "submit" or "obey," behavioural expectations are strongly implied. Compliance becomes normalised through shared moral assumptions rather than overt coercion. van Dijk (2006) describes this as implicit norm-setting, where ideology operates through common-sense formulations rather than direct instruction.

Discourse markers such as "women are expected" and "Islam does not expect" delimit acceptable roles while appearing explanatory. A key metaphor depicts women as the "source" of comfort and peace within the family. This imagery centres women emotionally yet assigns men the position of recipients rather than co-producers of care. Emotional restraint and endurance are presupposed as inherently feminine traits, aligning with van Dijk's notion of presupposition, whereby assumptions are treated as unquestionable truths. The expectation that women absorb emotional strain for marital harmony is presented not as social construction but as a natural order. Culturally, the sermon resonates with Yoruba ideals of *sùúrù* (patience), *irẹ̀lẹ̀* (humility), and *itọ́jú ilé* (home management). By embedding the Islamic nuptial sermon within these established values, the discourse gains cultural credibility and moral force. Resistance would appear as defiance of both religion and tradition. Ideologically, the passage exemplifies what can be termed emotional

domestication. Women are honoured symbolically, yet their worth is framed within the context of sustaining emotional equilibrium. Scholars such as Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) argue that Qur'anic ethics emphasise mutual emotional responsibility rather than gendered emotional labour. The sermon, however, selectively interprets these principles in ways that privilege female patience. Through ethical praise, affective language, and cultural normalisation, feminine virtues are constructed as indispensable to marital stability, thereby sustaining gender hierarchy in subtle, religiously sanctioned forms.

Findings

Four findings ensue from an analysis of ten *khutbatu al-nikāh* sermons among Yoruba Muslims in southwestern Nigeria. The man is placed as source (*orisun*), head (*olóri*), provider (*òlùpèsè*) and moral custodian, framed through responsibility and divine trust (*amānah*) rather than overt dominance. The woman is placed as derivative, submissive, patient (*sùúrù*), the latter constructed through presupposition and metaphor rather than explicit command. The asymmetry is structural: men act upon the world; women constitute the atmosphere within which men act. This hierarchy is presented as creational design and cultural inheritance. All sermons combine Qur'anic authority with proverbial wisdom (with Yoruba cultural imports) to create dual legitimation: gender hierarchy is at the same time divinely ordained (Q. 4:34, Q. 4:1, Q. 30:21) and culturally authentic; the husband is the head of the house, and the woman's patience is the ornament of the house ("Okùnrin ni olóri ilé," "Sùúrù obìnrin ni ọṣọ ilé"). The interdiscursivity is synthetic: Qur'anic concepts are expressed through Yorùbá categories; Yoruba proverbs (rendered in English) are invested with scriptural resonance. To resist male headship is to disobey divine fiat and to betray ancestral tradition.

Masculine dominance is modified by assertions of patriarchy and gentle models of prophethood. In contrast, feminine submission is idealised as involving affective notions of love (*ifé*), mercy (*aánú*), and tranquility (*sakīnah*, *ìdùnú*). We can see these changes as reflecting modern influences, yet not a single sermon challenges masculine headship, Gender Polarisation of *Qiwāmah*, or Hierarchy as Divine Order. We can describe these discursive strategies as a negotiated patriarchy.

Conclusion

This research explores the discursive production of ideologies of gender in Yorùbá Islamic nuptial sermons, or *khutbatu al-nikāh*. Drawing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse,

this research critically analysed ten purposively selected khutbatu al-nikāh (sermons) from 2020 to 2025. The aim of this research was informed by the glaring gap in the critical discourse analysis of religious discourse, with a focus on nuptial discourse in Nigeria. While many CDA studies on religious discourse in Nigeria have focused mainly on Christianity, the study of Islamic religious discourse, especially khutbatu al-nikāh, which has a preconfigured speech situation for defining legitimate marital roles, has remained conspicuously neglected. This is surprising given the central place of marriage in Islamic social reproduction. As khutbatu al-nikāh fuses Islamic discourse with proverbial wisdom from indigenous cultures, it combines a preconfigured speech situation with a hybrid ideology of discourse.

Four main findings arose. First, manhood and womanhood are built up through complementary but hierarchical linguistic resources: men as source, head, provider, and moral custodian; women as derivative, submissive, patient, and emotionally sustaining. Second, this hierarchy is legitimised by means of dual anchoring in Qur'anic revelation and Yorùbá cultural tradition, an interdiscursive strategy that makes opposition simultaneously impious and culturally inauthentic. Third, the dominant discursive formation is negotiated patriarchy: hierarchy is qualified (male authority is not tyranny), romanticised (female submission is love and mercy), and moralised (headship is responsibility), yet structural asymmetry remains intact and uncontested. Fourth, the corpus displays systematic interpretive foreclosure: contested Qur'anic clauses are suppressed, egalitarian counter-readings are absent, and alternative marital formations are rendered discursively unavailable.

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