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Original Article

“Keeping Women in their Place or Contesting Power?” Gender Relations in Runyankore-Rukiga Marriage Songs among the Bakiga

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Whereas marriage songs endorse and enforce patriarchal discourses and norms, they can be used as a strategy to subvert, challenge, and question the very patriarchal discourses and norms they support. Some of the marriage songs sung among the Bakiga contain gender-based expressions, which undermine the feminine gender by advising women to be submissive. This paper explores the adoption of the Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs as a literary genre, that is often used as an avenue wherein the resistance to the patriarchal construction of gender among the Bakiga is channelled. It examines how gender-related messages in marriage song lyrics can be invoked to challenge the existing gender power relations. Marriage songs analysed in this paper were purposively collected through recording marriage songs that were performed on marriage ceremonies among the Bakiga. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was adopted as a methodological and theoretical framework to interrogate whether Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs can act as an avenue through which gender inequalities, masculine domination, and feminine subordination among the Bakiga can be demystified and resisted. The findings reveal that while traditional marriage songs tend to sustain patriarchy, contemporary marriage songs do provide singers with an opportunity to publicly criticise those unacceptable cultural practices that undermine the feminine gender. The study recommends the use of marriage songs as an ideological platform for the contestation and redefining of gender construction among the Bakiga; as well as challenging the traditional Bakiga gender inequalities.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines how Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs can play a critical role in subverting the hegemonic discourses. It explores whether marriage songs can be used as a strategy to question the very patriarchal norms they support among the Bakiga in southwestern Uganda. The Bakiga, are known to have originated from present-day Rwanda and were already in Kigezi as early as 1500AD (Denoon, 1972; Karwemera, 1994; Ngorogoza, 1998). The Bakiga speak Rukiga as their first language and belong to the Bantu group, who live largely in the Kigezi region in southwestern Uganda (Uzoigwe, 1975). The Rukiga and Runyankore languages have a high degree of mutual intelligibility; hence, they have been classified as dialects of the same language: Runyankore-Rukiga (Asiimwe, 2016, 2024; Asiimwe et al., 2023). Therefore, the paper considers Runyankore-Rukiga to be one language and accordingly focuses on Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs, because the Runyankore songs, too, were found being sung in exclusively Rukiga-speaking areas.

Among the Bakiga, marriage is an important stage in the family formation cycle; and it is therefore almost synonymous with the family: it, in essence, means founding a family (Atekyereza, 2007). It is the only institution where men and women unite in one way or the other to uphold their familial relationship. Indeed, Baitwababo (1972) affirms this when he observes: “*Marriage was by far the most important institution of the society since it was by this means that it was created and perpetuated*”

(p. 79). Among the Bakiga, marriage is the most important institution; and it is never viewed from an individual perspective but as a family affair (Denoon, 1972). Marriage is normally instituted through a marriage function. Marriage is a site that presents gender construction and enactment of gender power relations being an institution that brings men and women together into familial relationships (Chimbarange, 2019). Marriage, therefore, is a site where gender issues (construction and deconstruction) play out.

During the marriage function, the bridegroom normally met his bride at the gate/entrance with a forked twig; and while holding the bride’s right hand with his left hand, he would tap her three times using the forked twig saying: “*You may speak once, but I shall speak twice*” (Ngorogoza, 1998, p. 37). The above expression is adopted in some Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs, such as the one known as *Nyamunyonyi* (Peacock) which is commonly sung at marriage ceremonies, especially during the give-away functions. The aforementioned expressions do command a woman to respond once while the man speaks more than once in case of any verbal altercation. There are other marriage songs such as *Aheeru Basheesha* (*It is dawn outside*) which portray a man as dominant (giving him an image of a lion and leopard), which positions men as fierce animals possessing characteristics that make them feared by women. Therefore, power negotiation among the Bakiga is reflected during the marriage ceremonies, where marriage songs containing gendered words and expressions are sung, advising a woman to be silent

in marriage, and not to talk back or quarrel (Karwemera, 2013).

Among the Bakiga, Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs play a key role during the marriage consummation rites; especially when the bride is being given away (*kuhingira*) in marriage (Karwemera, 2013). *Kuhingira* was a process among the Bakiga, culminating into a ceremony at which the parents of the bride officially hand over their daughter to her prospective husband, which has received a modernist construction of 'give-away'. In this paper, the term *give-away* is used to refer to *kuhingira*, although it is not its translation equivalent. On the day when the girl was to be given away for marriage, "the girls of the bride's lineage, dancing rhythmically, would utter some special marriage words advising the girl about what she would face, and how she should be tough (Ngorogoza, 1998, p. 36). The words being referred to above in Rukiga are "*Waaza ow'abandi bugoora, waaza owa mihingo-etayomba*" (p.55). This can be translated as "You are going to other people's place; you are going to a place where you are not allowed to quarrel". These words (in the songs) were used to advise a woman to be submissive and not to talk or quarrel as a deliberate or unconscious effort to create gender power relations among the Bakiga.

Marriage songs are sung at the girl's natal home after her parents have accepted the bride price when she is leaving her natal home, and when she is being received at her prospective marital home (Karwemera, 1994). Marriage songs contain many gendered expressions embedded in the linguistic devices therein, which play a big role in constructing the Bakiga patriarchal discourses, norms and beliefs. Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs do equip a girl with knowledge about gender expectations in her future marriage; coupled with how she is expected to behave (Ngorogoza, 1998). Whereas traditional Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs aim at "*Keeping women in their place*" by perpetuating patriarchal and hegemonic discourses as discussed above, contemporary marriage songs,

on the other hand, are seen to challenge and contest the status quo by aiming at "*Moving women from their place*". This paper seeks to interrogate how the Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs have been used as an avenue wherein to contest the existing gender power relations among the Bakiga communities and move women from those spaces where they were traditionally confined, into new gender spaces exclusively reserved for the masculine gender.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was applied as a theoretical framework to interrogate how Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs play a role in the contestation of gender power relations. Critical discourse analysis as the theoretical framework attempts to uncover or reveal opaque, implicit, and hidden dimensions of power, which are enacted and resisted through discourse (Dijk, 1995, 2015; Wodak, 2002). Critical discourse analysis takes special interest in the relationship between language and power relations (Wodak, 2002). Specifically, the Discourse Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), which is one of the CDA approaches was invoked. The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) aims to deconstruct the hegemonic, critiquing of ideology and power issues, as well as uncovering the irregularities in the text (Odebunmi, 2022). The Discourse Historical Approach provided the necessary devices which were used to identify linguistic constructions in the Runyakore-Rukiga marriage songs studied. Following DHA, it was possible to question how persons and actions are named, the arguments employed in the songs (discourse), characteristics and qualities attributed to social actors, Therefore, by applying DHA, it was easy to generate discourse topics from song extracts which constitute the themes/thematic areas that reflect contestation of gender power relations as reflected in different song extracts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Songs, especially folk songs sung during traditional marriage ceremonies have been implicated in the

construction of gender power relations. Okot (2007) notes that linguistic metaphors construct and enhance gender power relations whereby, the male is presented as a protector and provider in the familial space. He argues that songs give power and authority to a man and relegate the feminine gender to an inferior and peripheral position. Folksongs performed at wedding functions, in particular, illustrate how married women are expected to respect and obey their husbands who are viewed as gods and as such, songs could evoke guilt in women who fail to conform to the expectations (Vicky, 2014). Folksongs sung during traditional marriage rites serve the purpose of preaching respect, obedience, and docility to the bride thereby enacting while at the same time ratifying the existing power relations in society (Nonhlanhla, 2009).

Wedding songs performed by female folksingers expose patriarchal ideologies and socially sanctioned codes of behaviour where women are portrayed as subservient in the realm of matrimony (Vicky, 2016). Jassal (2012) argues that songs outline conditions of women's subservience to male dominance whereby the patriarchal ideology reproduced in songs licenses men to control women by spelling out the punishment accorded to women and associated consequences for transgression without spelling out the same for men. Wanjiru and Kaburi (2015) write that songs can communicate the superiority of men and demean women as the patriarchal behaviour illustrated in the songs dictates a woman's behaviour as inferior whereby gender roles outlined in the songs place men over women which could negatively affect women's participation in taking decisions in society. The above observations align with Coates (1998) when she argues that talk constructs gendered beings because the way women talk about men is powerful in constructing women as feminine subjects given that dominant discourses place men at the centre of the universe which makes women marginal. However, are all songs sung during traditional marriage ceremonies and/or

wedding female songs and folksongs as depicted above? In this paper, it is argued that the role marriage songs play in sustenance of gender power relations should be extended beyond folksongs and female songs.

Through its linguistic forms, language can also be used to challenge power, subvert it and alter distributions of power both in the short and long term (Wodak, 2001a, 2002). Songs, for instance, can be used by women to negotiate their space through the use of elements of satire in songs to fight for social justice and change in society (Sisana, 2007). Women can use songs to voice their concerns and negotiate their space, criticise the patriarchal structure, power and practices and raise issues that affect them without fear (Nonhlanhla, 2009; Zondi, 2008). Through song discourse, female artists can invade the patriarchal space, traditionally considered as male space, and gain the power to subvert patriarchy (Mugambi, 1994). Songs act as an avenue for the female folk to express themselves as a form of subtle means and protests to draw society to their predicament and indirectly influence the suppressor and the oppressor without hurting (Ojukwu & Ibekwe, 2020). Folksongs, for instance, create a medium for gender contestation and negotiation, enabling women to call on their men to acknowledge the essence of equity and complementarity of both sexes (Ezeifeke & Ogbazi, 2016).

Songs use their lyrics to show how to deal with relations and as well as the new modes women can use to resist subordination and subvert gender role stereotypes (Hamamra, 2020; Jerome, 2013; Wanjiru et al., 2015). Songs, especially folksongs can act as a strategy for constructing counter-hegemonic discourses and play a critical role in addressing women's subordination because they constitute the 'encyclopaedia of Ubuntu' and enhancing Ubuntu values that address women's subordination by creating humanness hence operationalise gender justice and equality in African contexts (Tamale, 2020). It can be argued, however,

that these studies focus largely on women and women's songs with limited attention given to their male counterparts leading to limited and unbalanced conclusions. Without a comparative analysis, interrogating how both male and female singers attempt to use marriage songs to undermine patriarchy and male chauvinism that subordinate the feminine gender, the discussion hangs in balance.

METHODOLOGY

The study approach used was qualitative, guided by the interpretive framework as the worldview while employing descriptive and analytical designs. Critical discourse analysis was used as a methodological framework because of its impartial process of critical questioning of power relations. The songs analysed in this paper were collected from the Kigezi region in south-western Uganda. The areas where songs were collected include Rubanda District, Kabale Municipality and Kabale District. The majority of the songs were collected during marriage functions and particularly during give-away functions. Some of the Runyankore-Rukiga songs were collected from shops which sell songs to the public. Other songs were recorded from the Voice of Kigezi FM radio station, and TV West at the time they were being played on those stations in the different programmes. The data collection process also involved the collection of cultural contextual information from some Runyankore-Rukiga marriage song composers and traditional dancers through interviews and focus group discussions. The cultural context was necessary for a better understanding and analysis of marriage songs. Context is an important notion for understanding language in use during critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2014; Stubbs, 1983) and it was necessary to understand the cultural context of the Bakiga. The people interviewed provided information on idiomatic and cultural-bound linguistics expressions that were difficult to comprehend and interpret.

A total of 56 songs were collected which included both audio and video recordings for the doctoral study. However, only 36 songs were included in the doctoral study, from which this paper was drawn. Again, not all the 36 songs considered for the doctoral study were included in this paper. It has already been argued that “When preparing the corpus for analysis, the collected data are downsized according to specific criteria such as frequency, representativity, (proto) typicality, intertextual or interdiscursive scope/influence, salience, uniqueness and redundancy” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 12). Purposive sampling was used to select only those songs which contained gendered content. It is preferred because it aims at choosing only those units of analysis that are appropriate for the analysis of the research problem and question; that would, hence yield, the most suitable information relevant to the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2021).

I had to listen to all the songs to select the right songs for analysis purposes. After skimming the data, excerpts which contained gendered messages were purposively extracted from the songs through the process of *recontextualisation* for purposes of analysing traces of contestation of gender power relations in the respective songs. *Recontextualisation* is a process of transferring given elements (texts) to a new context without taking them out of text (*de-contextualisation*) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, 2016). Extracts were not taken out of context while transferring them from the individual Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs. This was achieved by ensuring that all the necessary information was extracted to accompany the excerpts. Recontextualisation was followed by a translation of the song excerpts from Runyakore-Rukiga into English to ease the interpretation and analysis of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes were generated from the findings by applying critical discourse analysis which are discussed in the next section. Themes are generated

by highlighting those issues that cut across many lines and stanzas, geared at affirming the crosscutting issues (Gee, 2014). Themes generated in this section reflect how Runyankore-Rukiga songs have been used especially by female contemporary singers and traditional performers as a strategy to challenge hegemonic discourse and male chauvinism in traditional songs. An attempt has been made to show how the Runyankore-Rukiga traditional marriage songs tend to 'keep women in their place' whereas the contemporary songs attempt to 'move women from their place'.

Song- *Reeba Enyangi Nizinteera*

Omushaija ti kicuncu

N'okuba engwe ti ngwe

Otamutima

Kwonka nooshushusha okiri omwana

Ohumure eby'obushwere nikwo bigyenda

The use of the negative morpheme *ti-* (meaning *NOT*) in the expression: *Omushaija ti kicuncu* (A man is not a lion) in the above extract, signals a protest against the hitherto metaphorical representation of a man as a lion and/or leopard in many traditional Runyakore-Rukiga marriage songs. The song *Reeba Enyangi Nizinteera*, from which the Song Excerpt above was extracted, serves as an avenue through which a contestation of gender power asymmetry can be channelled. The protest against the symbolic representation of the husband as a fierce animal provides a platform where male chauvinism and patriarchal beliefs can be challenged. The song breeds confidence in the bride, that a man is also a normal human being, who should not be feared by his wife. As Lazar (2007) observes: although the prevailing gender ideology is hegemonic and exercised in different ways; it is contestable. She maintains that the interrelationship between gender, power, and ideology can be demystified in discourse through text and talk. Through demystifying the image of the lion and that

Deconstructing and demystifying the 'Lion' and 'Leopard' Myth

There is a prevailing move to use some of the contemporary marriage songs to contest and challenge traditional *myths* and beliefs where a man has been constructed as an *ekicuncu* (lion) and *engwe* (Leopard). The contestation against such social constructs can be found in the excerpt below which attempts to challenge the above myth.

A man is not a lion

He is not even a leopard

Do not fear him

It seems you are still a child

Take heart. That is how marriage normally is

of the leopard by applying 'negation' as a linguistic device, the excerpt challenges, and also protests against gender power relations status quo; because not only is such imagery used in the song, but it can also be used in ordinary conversations.

By advising a woman not to fear her husband using the expression *otamutiina* (do not fear him), she is given the courage to face her future husband without fear. The negation of the verb *kutiina* (to fear) to *otamutiina* ('not to fear a man) presents a new narrative in the Bakiga gender power relations discourse that encourages women's protests against fearing men (their husbands) based on gender binaries. The song above presents an avenue that can be used to challenge the frustrating conditions women endure in marriage, whose effect over time, can be naturalised as a common-sense notion.

The singer indirectly challenges a woman in the song to demonstrate some degree of maturity in marital matters. This is expressed in the words: *Kwonka nooshushusha okiri omwana. Ohumure*

eby'obushwere nikwo bigyenda (It seems you are still a child. Take heart. That is how marriage normally is). The singer asks a woman to stop behaving like a child and take marriage seriously by not accepting divorce and mistreatment in the song. Using a metaphor of *omwana* (child) when comparing the 'fear' that a woman has towards her husband/marriage is intended to give courage to a woman to withstand what is happening and to challenge the status quo. The coordinating conjunction *kwonka* (but) which plays a comparative role in the sentence further empowers a woman in her fight for her right in her marriage

since she would not want to be labelled a child by leaving her marital home.

The above contestation of gender power relations in a contemporary song seems to be "moving women from their place" of subordination, to challenge traditional marriage songs sung at give-away ceremonies, which have always contained messages that threatened the bride. For instance, a man is portrayed as a lion and/or a leopard in a traditional song, which are fierce animals that she has to prepare to face in her prospective marriage. The extract below presents a man both as a lion and a leopard.

Song- Aheeru Bwasheesha

<i>Aheeru bwasheesha</i>	It is dawn outside
<i>Ow'abandi n'amaaya 'we ai ee</i>	The home of other people is a den
<i>Bwasheesha murungi -</i>	Dear, it is dawn already
<i>Ag'entare n'engwe 'we ai ee</i>	A place where lions and leopards live. 'we ai ee'
<i>Aheeru bwasheesha</i>	It is dawn outside.

In the Song above, the bride is being warned, that it is dawn already; and that, therefore, she ought to prepare herself to leave her natal home and go for marriage in a foreign home. The possessive pronoun *ow'abandi* (other people's home) is used to inform the bride that she neither owns nor belongs to the new home she is about to join. The new home that the bride is joining is referred to as *amaaya* (den), a place where lions and leopards live. This also communicates the wilderness she is going into in her future marriage. The images of *entare* (lion) and *engwe* (leopard) constructed in the song refer to the prospective husband/home. The bride is forewarned and psychologically prepared to face her husband, in her marriage, introduced to her using the symbols of the 'lion' and 'leopard' just in the same way one faces these two fierce and dangerous animals. The two metaphors signify a kind of intimidation, that is

being implanted in the mind of the young girl, using images of a lion and leopard. This is a form of constructing asymmetrical marital gender power relations. It is such statements whose roots can be traced from Runyankore-Rukiga traditional marriage songs that the contemporary Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs, discussed in the first part of this section, protest and contest, thereby attempting to move women from this culturally constructed 'place' to new gender 'place'.

Challenging Wife Battering

There are some contemporary Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs that tend to challenge and protest against women battering in marital relationships. The excerpt below, from a contemporary song, acts as a form of disapproval against women battering in marital relationships.

Song - Aha Irembo

<i>Omukazi w'okushwera</i>	A woman for marriage
<i>Ti ngoma y'okuteera</i>	She is not a drum for beating
<i>Twamukuha naasheka</i>	We have given her to you when she is laughing
<i>Tutarishanga naarira</i>	We should never find her in the future crying
<i>Twamukuha ataine nkojo</i>	We have given her to you without any scar on her body
<i>Nyabura omurinde gye</i>	Please take good care of her
<i>Omukunde nk'oku ari</i>	Love her the way she is
<i>N'oku atari omukunde</i>	Even love her the way she is not
<i>Ekyaaawe omukunde</i>	Just love her
<i>Nawe naija kukworobera</i>	She will also be simple for you to handle

In the Song above, a female lead singer uses the image of a drum to warn the suitor that a woman (wife) is not a 'drum to be beaten' in their marriage. The use of imagery here is an indication that beating a wife in marital relationships can no longer be tolerated by women. In addition to the application of imagery, there is also the use of *negation* (ti-negative/not) to protest and challenge the status quo. This is in the sentences *Omukazi w'okushwera*, *ti ngoma y'okuteera* (*A woman who is for marriage, is not a drum for beating*), allows the lead female singer to overstep her social and cultural limitations and vehemently condemn the practice of wife beating as intolerable. By negating the sentence, the singer uses marriage songs as a tool to depict the unacceptability of the practice of wife-beating; critiques it, and contests all the related Bakiga patriarchal discourses. This emerging kind of gender construction in the Runyankore marriage songs, if well sustained, can over time result in what Lazar (2007) refers to as "the taken-for-granted and normalcy of such knowledge" (p. 147) and could mystify the gender power differential and inequality. It challenges and criticises the patriarchal societal structure, where the traditional practice of a husband beating and mistreating his wife is prevalent among the Bakiga.

The suitor is again warned that the family members of the girl should never at any time find their daughter crying in her prospective marriage, because they have given her to him when she's smiling. This is expressed in the sentences: *Twamukuha naasheka; tutarishanga naarira* (*We have given her to you when she is laughing; we should never find her in future crying*). The use of a far future tense (*ri/rya*) in the extract without a definite time limit conditions the suitor at all times to ensure that the bride is never mistreated in their future marriage until death does them part. The song becomes one of the ways women can indirectly express their freedom by entering into the public arena to challenge the patriarchal power and beliefs in the Bakiga community. It has been argued that language can be used to challenge power, subvert it or even alter the distribution of power (Wodak, 2002). Bearing in mind that among the Bakiga, beating a wife in marriage was traditionally a common practice (Karwemera, 2013), the above marriage song acts as a form of protest by the women against such unacceptable practices, as well as challenging and subverting gender power relations.

The singer in the above extract cautions the suitor never to cause any bodily harm to the bride in their future marriage. This is illustrated in the words: *Twamukuha ataine nkojo; nyabura omurinde gye* (*We have given her to you without any scar on her body; please, take good care of her*). Although the above expression sounds polite, requesting the suitor not to cause any harm (scar), on the bride's body, the illocutionary force behind such an expression is a warning. There would be consequences in case the bride is found mistreated or beaten in her future marriage.

The suitor is further advised in the above extract to love the bride/wife as a precondition for her to be manageable. This is illustrated by the following expression: *Omukunde nk'oku ari; n'oku atari omukunde. Ekyawe omukunde; nawe naija kukworobera murungi* (*Love her the way she is; love her (even) the way she is not. Just love her; She will also be simple for you to handle*). The songs ask the suitor to have unconditional love towards his wife.

Song-Kare

Amaka gagumire

Harimu "Fumura ogyende"

Hariyo okukwata amatu

kwonka byona obyemere.

The use of the idiom *okukwata amatu* (crushing someone's ears), in the song accords an automatic licence to the husbands to beat their wives. Through the use of such idiomatic expressions, the bride is provided with prior information on how she will be beaten, and her ears will be crushed. She is advised to withstand all the mistreatment. This is found in the following words: *kwonka byona obyemere*. (*However, you must withstand all these*). This extract is from one of those traditional marriage songs which are comprised of patriarchal discourses. Such hegemonic discourses seem to be facing formidable protest and contest from contemporary songs as discussed in this section.

In whatever state, form, structure or condition the wife is in, she is expected to be loved. Therefore, the suitor is deprived of the power not to love his wife because of the way she is or looks. When the above song types are constantly sung, and performed at marriage functions, they contribute towards enacting specific gender ideologies. Ideologies are enacted, re-enacted and circulated through discourse (Lazar, 2007). When such song discourses, as the one cited above, are constantly performed; they provide an avenue for redefining gender power relations, necessary for conflict management, where the song indirectly stresses the need that the married couple to love each other.

The protest demonstrated in the above extracts is a response to some traditional marriage songs which support wife battering among the Bakiga. For instance, the extract below is from one of those traditional songs that encourage women battering in marital relationships:

Marriage is hard.

You will be chased away from your marriage.

Your ears will be smashed during your marriage.

However, you must withstand all these.

Challenging Divorce and Cowardice

Marriage songs can act as a form of tapping the informal power that women have at their disposal; they are vital tools in the socialisation process, which can be exploited towards subversion of unequal gender power relations. Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs present a protest against divorcing women. The song below challenges the Bakiga communal patriarchal constructions, where a woman is expected to be timid and submissive in marriage. In this song, the father advises his daughter to be courageous and avoid being timid lest she will be chased from her marriage.

Song-Tumuhingire Agyende

<i>Irooko ogyende mwana wangye</i>	You go (for marriage) my child
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Okuume ebihama haza otatiina</i>	Keep the secrets and do not be scared
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Amaka ni nka waakareeba</i>	The family (marriage) is like gambling
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Nigeetenga okukwatanisa</i>	It (family/marriage) needs cooperation
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Otatiina okaba ekinyabwoba</i>	Do not be scared; do not be a coward
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Reero bakaija kukushenda</i>	And they chase you out of your marital home
<i>Ogumeho Mutamba-Irungu</i>	Goodbye <i>Mutamba-Irungu</i>
<i>Ogumeho gye</i>	Goodbye; go well
<i>Okasigara nooyemaamaata</i>	And you keep regretting your actio

The song excerpt above demonstrates that marriage songs can be used to impact the Bakiga gender power relations ideology. The lead singer uses repetition as a linguistic strategy to emphasise the need for the bride to stand firm and courageous in her future marriage. The repeated textual phrases and patterns, in the above extract, focus on empowering the feminine gender. The phrase *otatiina* (do not be afraid) is repeated a number of times in the song telling the bride to be firm, and not quit. This is a form of challenging traditional social control. Through discourse, gender ideology assumptions are often circulated and become

common sense and natural (Lazar, 2007). This is a bold step taken towards empowering women to fight back in their marriage relationship in case of any mistreatment or men's intent to divorce women from their marital homes.

Through negation, the phrase *Otatiina okaba ekinyabwoba* (Do not be scared; do not be a coward) allows the bride in her marriage not to accept being bulldozed. Given that songs are performative texts; the repetition of performative acts is key in gender construction, as espoused by Butler (1990), when such songs are repeatedly sung

and performed, they may affect people's perceptions and ideologies about gender. Again, the repetition empowers the bride and gives her the requisite courage and confidence to fight against any mistreatment directed towards her by her husband, or her in-laws. Such a song shakes the traditional gender power centres in marriage to the roots; which throughout history have always been vested in the husbands among the Bakiga (Ngorogoza, 1998). The suitor is meanderingly warned through the song not to mistreat his bride/wife/woman (their daughter), which qualifies the song to be a form of protest and contest.

The song further challenges divorce by encouraging the bride not to accept being divorced from her marriage. The use of onomatopoeic expression *nooyemaamaata*, (meaning she will regret her action if she accepts divorce), empowers women to resist the traditional practice, where a woman could be divorced at any time in her marriage. It should be recalled that among the Bakiga, divorce was acceptable as long as a woman was deemed to have failed to perform those expected gender roles or any other societal expectations of her; or if there was any other wrongdoing on her part (Karwemera, 1994, 2013). The woman's parents would in fact be even asked to pay back (*okuzimuura*) the bride price/wealth that her husband had paid to them. Discourse is key, here, in creating a critical awareness and developing strategies for resistance and change (Lazar, 2007). The use of the coined word *Mutamba-Irungu*, a nickname given to a girl who is being given away for marriage signifying that her presence was keeping away boredom from the homestead further elevates the girl's status.

Given the fact that it is the girl's father who advises her, in the song, not to accept divorce, and happens

to be superior to her in terms of power relationship, the above song challenges the patriarchal discourse; and attempts to reverse gender power relations imbalances. This finding resonates with the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis principle of the Complexity of Gender and Power Relations where Lazar (2007) argues that "Relations of power and dominance can be discursively resisted and counter-resisted in a dynamic struggle over securing and challenging the interests at stake" (p. 148). In the above cases, marriage songs then act as a form of social protest and intervention to rectify women's predicaments in gender-related issues and disputes. Telling the yet-to-be-married girl, not accept to being divorced from her marital home, is yet another avenue used to challenge societal beliefs that are detrimental to feminine gender empowerment. Important to note, is the relationships of power in the discourse regarding who is involved in the discourse (Fairclough, 1989). In the song excerpt, it is a daughter-father relationship which brings in the aspect of relational modality that is intended to equip his daughter to resist male dominance and being bulldozed.

The kind of gender construction discussed in the above extracts is contrary to the song Excerpt 5 below, where a woman is sent away from her marital home because she has failed to satisfactorily perform the expected gender roles. There is the application of the subjunctive mood in the expression *ogyende* (*go away/leave your marital home*). The woman is politely commanded to leave her marital home. When the woman complains (asks a question-interrogative mood) about a difficult and quarrelsome marriage, she is instead, politely commanded by her man to leave the marriage as demonstrated in the excerpt below.

Song-Nyowe Nkore ki?*Nyowe nkore ki?*

(Me) what should I do?

Irooko ogyende!**Go away (leave your marital home)!***Nyowe ngambe ki?*

(Me) what should I say?

Irooko ogyende!**Go away (leave your marital home)!***Nyowe ntoore hi?*

(Me) where should I go?

Irooko ogyende!**Go away (leave your marital home)!**

The phrase “*Irooko ogyende!* (*Go away/leave your marital home!*) the above song is repeated several times whenever a woman complains and seeks advice. One would, for instance, expect the next sentence after a woman complains, or asks for advice, to be at least a declarative sentence (indicative mood) responding to the question (interrogative mood), and then providing counsel or advice to the affected woman. Using such polite commands (subjunctive mood), in the above extract, undermines a woman's power because she does not challenge such commands expressed in the

song. An attempt is being made by some of the singers of contemporary songs to subvert such gender power relations and mistreatment of women as the one discussed above.

Elevating the Bride's Value and Status

In a number of marriage songs, sung and performed at give-away ceremonies, the education status of the bride is mentioned and highlighted by the lead singers, both male and female. In the song below, the singer mentions that the bride is well-educated before giving her away for marriage.

Song-Mwije Tuhingire*Ogu mwana ka mbagambire*

Let me tell you about this child

Aine emicwe mirungi

She has good manners

Kandi ayegire kurungi

She is well educated

Nimureeba taine nshonga

She does not have any problem

Interestingly, the education status of the bride is also mentioned in another song as illustrated in the excerpt below.

Song-Emily*Mwebare kuzaara nan'okworora kurungi*

Thank you for giving birth and the good upbringing

Mukashomesa Emily

You educated Emily

Akashoma kurungi

She is well educated

Mukamurinda n'ahari buri kabi koon

You protected her against any harm

Mbwenu eriizoba amagoba mwagareeba

Today, you are harvesting the benefits

Similarly, in yet another song below, the singer again highlights the education level and status of the bride. This is illustrated in the Song Excerpt 9 below:

Song-Okuhingira Nocole

Nic akakura gye

Nic grew up well

Yaashoma

She was educated

Yaagira obwengye omwishiki

The girl became clever

Purayimare na sekendure na Yunivaasite bikashemera obwo naaajwara She completed primary, secondary and university education and graduated at a colourful function

It is interesting to note that excerpts, from all three songs; as well as the other songs that have not been included here, use evaluative statements to elevate the status of the bride. Evaluative statements in Runyankore-Rukiga are normally constituted by adverbs of manner. Such adverbs, in Runyankore-Rukiga normally describe a verb, an adjective, a fellow adverb or a whole sentence (Gumoshabe & Ndoleriire, 2020). Gumoshabe and Ndoleriire, 2020 add that adverbs of manner show how an action was performed. Evaluative are “statements about desirability or undesirability embedded within phrases in which evaluative adjectives, elements, noun phrases, or words are used to evaluate in terms of importance or usefulness” (Fairclough, 2003 p. 172). The singer uses such evaluative adverbs as *gye/kurungi* (meaning doing something well) and evaluative adjective *mirungi* (referring to the bride having good manners), to stress how important and desirable the bride is. One may wonder, what could be the intention of mentioning the education status of the bride at a function which is not related to education? In this case, it could be argued that such information would be misplaced in the song. However, it is included for a purpose: to elevate the socio-cultural position of the bride.

The suitor is indirectly alerted to how valuable and important their daughter is. It is, therefore, not assumed that the future husband will bulldoze her

into their marriage since she is well-educated. Lazar (2007) observes that power and dominance can be discursively resisted through textual representations of gendered social practices including interactional strategies of talk. Praising the education level of the bride seems to set the transition towards women's empowerment that is built in the composition of contemporary marriage songs. This is different from traditionally praising the body parts and beauty of the bride. Here, the bride is valued based as well on her other positive attributes and qualities such as education. This tends to uplift the socio-cultural and self-esteem of the bride, in her future marital relationship. The transition serves as a silent contest against gender inequality in marriage because education contributes to wealth creation in the home and improves one's value in the community. There is an obvious reason why the different singers choose to accompany the bride's beauty with her education status, and such a choice cannot simply be considered coincidental. It has a bearing on gender power relations in the new home that the two new spouses are yet to constitute.

As a form of protest, some marriage songs contest gender power relations and gender inequalities by praising the girl child. The song below, which was common on many give-away functions during the data collection period shows how the girl child is valued.

Song- Ngabwa*Ka mbagambire bagyenzi*

Let me tell you my friends

Omwana w'omwishiki n'engabo

A girl child is a shield

Reeba obu azaarwa osiimbe amaju oyebaze ogwo Nyamuhanga
 you kneel down and thank the Creator

When the child is born,

Omweta eiziina Ngabwa

You call her the name Ngabwa

In the song *Ngabwa* above, the singer applies a linguistic metaphor to emphasise the importance and value of the girl child in a home. The linguistic metaphor: *Omwana w'omwishiki n'engabo* (A girl child is a shield) acts as a protest symbol levelled against the normative beliefs of valuing the boy child more than the girl child. Linguistic metaphors are powerful tools; and if invoked, they can be central in maintaining gender power relations (Eckert & McConell-Ginet, 2003). The singer, thus, uses an image of a shield and compares the role played by a girl child, in her family, to that of a shield. Traditionally, a shield is used during war, when people are fighting, to defend themselves from their enemies. Lazar (2007) argues that language (spoken and written) can contribute to the

reproduction and maintenance of the social order while at the same time resisting and transforming that order. Comparing the girl child with a shield, while using a metaphor is an attempt to transform the social order and challenge hegemonic gender constructs that tend to value the boy child more than his counterpart. The singer goes ahead to convince the listeners to thank the Creator whenever a girl child is born which hints at the view that the girl child is a gift from the Creator.

The beauty of the woman (bride) has been exploited in some marriage songs to enable appropriate navigation of women's space in the public arena, as illustrated in the Song below.

Song-Baija*Enganda zaahiga we amazima*

Clans have come together; truly they have

*Kanyaanya n'akati keera***My little sister is a white stick***Enganda zaahiga we iye*

Clans have come together

*Aku aboojo beezesa amaino***That the boys use to clean their teeth***Enganda zaahiga we amazima*

Clans have come together; truly they have

Nyineeka kyo hika haihi

Let the head of the family come close

Enganda zaahiga we iye

Clans have come together

Oyakiire omukamwana

And you welcome the daughter-in-law

Enganda zaahiga we amazima

Clans have come together; truly they have

Munyaanya reeba yaamureeta

Her brother has brought her

Enganda zaahiga we iye

Clans have come together

*Naayaka ni nk'enyonyoozi***She is shining like a star**

In the Song above, the bride's brother uses the metaphor *Kanyaanya n'akati keera* (*My little sister is a white stick*) to inform the suitor how beautiful his sister is. He indirectly informs the suitor or in-laws how his sister is a '*white stick that boys use to clean their teeth*'. The significance of such a statement is to praise the bride's beauty and elevate her self-esteem because one cannot put in the mouth something that is dirty. Normally, when one is going to clean his or her teeth with a stick, they have to look for something that is clean and good. The use of the simile *Naayaka ni nk'enyonyoozi* (*She is shining like a star*) uplifts the bride's socio-cultural status. This simile is intended to illustrate the bride's beauty who shines like a star. With such evaluative statements used in the song, the future husband is reminded to handle such a beautiful

woman with care. This hoists the woman's social power in her future marital home and balances gender power relations in her marriage. Language has been noted to be intertwined with social power (Wodak, 2002). Given that the significance of the bride's beauty has been uplifted in the song by the lead singer, it also positively impacts her self-esteem; especially if the bride matches with the beauty described in the song.

Enhancing Positive Gender Ideologies

Traditionally, a girl was never accorded the opportunity to inform her parents about her choice of marriage partner, and/or when and whom to marry among the Bakiga (Karwemera, 1994, 2013). The extract below shows the girl informing her mother about her wish to get married.

Song- *Ryaba riri Eizooba Rikuru*

Immaculate akaimuka omu kasheeshe

Yaagambira nyina we mpora X2

Ati: Maama embeho y'etitumbi enyisire"

Nyina we tarakimanyire

Nyina we yaateekateeka ati shana

Burangiti yeeye ekuzire.

Yaaguma naabuuza nyina

Yaaguma naabuza nyina we X2

Ati: "Maama niinyenda ekifuba nkigwemu"

Immaculate woke up one morning

Talked to her mother politely

She said: "Mum, coldness at night is killing me"

Her mother did not understand what she meant

Her mother thought that perhaps her blanket is old

She kept asking her mother incessantly

She kept asking her other incessantly

She said: "I need a chest to lean on"

The above song portrays a girl complaining to her mother about the night coldness she is enduring. She repeatedly and constantly complains to her mother, but the mother seems not to understand the nature of the coldness her daughter was referring to. This failure, by her mother to decipher the hidden meaning her daughter was expressing stems from the fact that culturally, girls were not expected to inform their parents about their urge to get married. A girl did not have the leeway to inform her parents

who her prospective suitor was. So, she would instead be informed by her parents or relatives whom to marry and when (Denoon, 1972; Ngorogoza, 1998). Therefore, the above song, in which a girl vehemently tells her mother that she too needs a husband, is an attempt to usurp the parents' powers; and hence, break the chains and constraints that forbade girls from making such decisions. The song, therefore, shows that the hitherto patriarchal power is at stake. Hence, such songs could be one

of the avenues that have afforded girls an opportunity to boldly tell their parents about their marital relationship choices, a thing that was traditionally forbidden and unacceptable among the Bakiga hence enhancing positive gender ideologies.

In addition, the fact that a girl informs her mother first means that it is the mother who introduces the same subject to the girl's father. This is contrary to the old traditional marriage procedure, where it was the girl's father who had to inform his wife about their daughter's pending marriage (Karwemera, 2013). The authority and power to announce a

pending marriage proposal (give-away) of the girl child is now shifting from the masculine gender (father/husband) to that of the feminine gender (mother and/or daughter) in a familial space. It is through such songs, that the father's authority over his daughter's marriage partner choice and when to marry is being contested. This is likely to change gender power relations in the familial space.

The song below calls for gender equality, concerning matters of forgiveness in marriage, as depicted in the following excerpt.

Song-Rukundo Etasanguka

<i>Iwe mukyara we hinduka mwana</i>	(You) wife, please turn to your husband
<i>Ogambire omushaija waawe</i>	Tell your husband
<i>Oti, "Nkushobeize onsaasire"</i>	That, "I am sorry, forgive me please"
<i>Iwe mushaija we hinduka mwana</i>	(You) husband, please turn to your wife
<i>Ogambire omukyara waawe</i>	Tell your wife
<i>Oti, "Nkushobeize onsaasire"</i>	That, "I am sorry, forgive me please"
<i>Iwe mukyara nsaasira tinkigarukira</i>	My wife, please forgive me. I will not repeat it.
<i>Kaibagye omusaasire</i>	Kaibagye, please forgive him
<i>Omwami yaagaruka</i>	The man has come back (to you)
<i>Naanye mwami nsaasira</i>	My husband, (you) forgive me too
<i>Iwe sebo omusaasire</i>	(You) sir, please forgive her.
<i>Omukyara yaakushaba ekiganyiro</i>	The wife has requested (you) for forgiveness.

Whereas one may find that in many marriage songs, a woman is normally presumed to be at 'fault'; and she is the one who is asked to apologise; in this song, however, the singer demands that both the husband and wife are at fault. They are both accordingly requested to apologise to each other. Interestingly, it is the man who is requested in the song to apologise first. This song, therefore, emphasises gentility on the side of the man; and points to the need for men to be remorseful

whenever they make mistakes in a marriage relationship too. Such marriage songs can therefore be viewed as one of the avenues through which male chauvinism and superiority over the female folk can be challenged. The song treats the husband and wife as equals, where each one deserves reciprocation whenever a mistake is committed. The singer's call for forgiveness is reciprocal and this may go a long way in challenging toxic masculinities that seem to have existed in some Bakiga families.

Through marriage song discourses, positive gender relations ideologies, beliefs and attitudes can be enacted, constructed, encouraged, and propelled. Ideologies are representations of practices, which are usually sourced from a given perspective, and often geared at maintaining unequal power relations

and dominance (Lazar, 2007). Through the Runyankore-Rukiga marriage song discourse, constructive and gender-sensitive ideologies have been constructed by the lead singer as shown in Song below:

Song-Okwate Omugongo

<i>Mutware omukazi waanyu!</i>	Take your wife!
<i>Mumukwate gye</i>	Treat her well
<i>Murinde gye</i>	Look after her well
<i>Mumubaise gye</i>	Make her comfortable
<i>Mumukuume gye</i>	Protect her well
<i>Ku aribarema</i>	If she becomes unbearable for you
<i>Mumungarurire aha</i>	Bring her back to me.

The lead singer uses an adverb of manner to describe how the bride should be positively treated, which empowers her to demand the same treatment. The adverb *gye* (referring to doing something well/good), in a way, as used in the text, enacts positive gender ideology. The singer asks the in-laws to take their wife (bride) and subsequently requests them to ensure that they protect their bride, safeguard her well, and look after her well. These are indeed, positive gender ideologies being emphasised here. This is contrary to some other traditional songs that mainly focus on the mistreatment of a woman in her marital home. The lead singer further indirectly warns in-laws not to harm their daughter, should they find her difficult to live with, and unbearable having taken good care of her. The in-laws are advised to bring her back: which is a resolution strategy to address gender-based violence in marital relationships. Requesting the in-laws to come back to the bride's natal home if there are any misunderstandings could be intended to ensure amicable resolutions to gender-based marital conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs provide a platform that can be exploited by both male and female singers to question and challenge patriarchal discourses. Whereas traditional songs tend to 'keep women in their place', the contemporary songs on the other hand attempt to 'move women from their place'. Runyankore-Rukiga songs contain both linguistic and stylistic devices which can be invoked to contest women's battering, and cowardice among women, and deconstruct women's subordination. Gender ideologies embedded in song discourses can enhance women's value and status in marital relations, and protest the existing gender norms, mores, and beliefs that traditionally marginalised the feminine gender. Contestations, particularly embedded in contemporary Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs, can be used in the struggle to advocate for gender equality; and to challenge asymmetrical gender power relations among the Bakiga as a community. Runyankore-Rukiga marriage songs especially the contemporary songs, can be used to contest unequal gender power relations. Marriage songs can no longer be used as

a strategy to “keep women in their place”. Therefore, there is a need for the contemporary traditional/cultural performers and singers of these songs to refocus their efforts on gender symmetry constructions in their marriage songs since such songs seem to be popular at most give-away ceremonies.

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