

**Gender ideology and power relations in Sahebjam's Stoning of Soraya M: A feminist critical discourse analysis**

**Meliana Siboro\*, Rahmadsyah Rangkuti, Bahagia Tarigan**

Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author; Email: [melianasiboro1@gmail.com](mailto:melianasiboro1@gmail.com)

---

**ABSTRACT**

The context of the study is the ongoing protests and demonstrations by women in many places in Iran. This study aims to examine the demonstration of gender ideology and power in Sahebjam's *Stoning of Soraya M*. Qualitative descriptive method is used to investigate the relationship between gender ideology and power relations and how it creates a power imbalance between men and women in Iranian society. *Stoning of Soraya M* by Freidoune Sahebjam, published on September 12, 1990, serves as the primary data source for this study. Data are analysed through the lens of the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, specifically Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (2007). The findings of the study suggest that the country's laws, including the Constitution, the Civil Code, and the Criminal Code, create a complicated legal environment for women. While the Constitution guarantees equal civil rights for men and women, religious law supersedes other laws and is frequently abused by individuals to commit crimes against women. This study reveals how gender ideology and power relations to women reflected through discourse can demonstrate how women are treated in different parts of the world.

**Keywords:** gender ideology, power, novel, feminist

---

**Article history**

*Submitted:*

5 May 2023

*Accepted:*

17 July 2023

*Published:*

17 July 2023

---

**Citation (APA Style):** Siboro, M., Rangkuti, R., & Tarigan, B. (2023). Gender ideology and power relations in Sahebjam's *Stoning of Soraya M: A feminist critical discourse analysis*. *LITERA*, 22(2), 149-158. <https://doi.org/10.21831/ltr.v22i2.60447>.

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Gender ideology is defined as the study of attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of women and men in society (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2016). It refers to a set of beliefs regarding the rights, responsibilities, and roles that should be assigned to men and women within a community (Ungaretti & Etchezahar, 2013). Gender ideology can also refer to the views held by society that justify the inequality of the sexes, a definite sort of mindset that supports gender stratification (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). This idea can be reflected in more broad senses or in more specific contexts, such as in family, economically, legally, politically, or socially (Kroska, 2007). Considering that traditional gender ideology tends to portray males in a more superior light, one might deduce that gender ideology is closely tied to the distribution of power and duties between the genders (Li et al., 2020).

Power is defined as a relation among people (Dahl, 1957) and the ability or the right to control people or thing. Gender influences power at all societal levels, and the concept of "gender," which encompasses the set of roles, behaviours, and attitudes that cultures deem suitable for men and women, is arguably the most enduring catalyst, result, and mechanism of power dynamics across all domains, ranging from the private sphere of households to the highest echelons of political governance (Koester, 2015). In relation to gender, a typical perspective is that men have the upper hand over women (Rustiyani et al., 2019). As Lazar (2007) has suggested, traditional gender ideology encourages power imbalance, which comes in various forms, particularly in women who live in patriarchal cultures such as the countries of South East Asia (Niaz & Hassan, 2006), South Asia (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019), Middle East and North Africa (Moghadam, 2020), thus, creating situations where women found themselves in disadvantaged positions.

Alongside the development of feminist works of literature, studies of feminist discourse have also developed over time. Discourse is how language is used (Ullah, Ayub, Kazmi & Raza, 2021) and how power is organized in society. Critical Discourse Analysis aims to find hidden connections from a social, cultural, and political point of view by clarifying the link between "discourse practice and social

structure" (Wodak, 2002). Linguists such as Fairclough, Van Dijk, and Wodak established groundwork theories of analyzing discourse to find how social practice is constructed through languages.

However, Lazar (2007) argues that previous theorists did not put a fundamental interest in gender analysis. Therefore, there needs to be an approach that can critically study aspects that have been studied by feminists beyond the textual and context of the discourse. Consequently, she proposed the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), whose primary focus is to analyze the connections between language, gender, power, and ideologies. According to Lazar's argument, the combination of feminism and CDA has the potential to provide a powerful political critique for action (Sjölander, 2009). Lazar's introduction draws further attention to a number of the challenges confronted by feminists and other critical researchers. These challenges include whether or not the researchers are operating within or outside their respective disciplines and the difficulties that arise when conducting research with a distinct political agenda.

The use of language to demonstrate gender ideology, and power is tightly tied to social attitudes. Before, men were in control of language as philosophers, public speakers, politicians, and linguists. Therefore, they instilled sexism in the language to maintain dominance (Weatherall, 2003). Controlling the context of a speaking situation, including the language employed and the individuals involved, is one method of exercising authority over gender (Rabbiah, 2012). Language is used to construct gender by emphasizing and conveying societal expectations for both sexes (Rahmi, 2015). The societal perception of these distinct roles and behaviour patterns expected of men and women empowers some individuals while disempowering others. Hence, the key interest of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis centred on how gender ideology and power are produced/reproduced, discussed, contested, negotiated, and contested in the representation of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people's social and personal text and talk (Lazar, 2007). She proposed five interrelated Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis principles: feminist analytical activism, gender as ideological structure and practice, the complexity of power and gender relations, discourse in the (de)construction of gender, and critical reflexivity as praxis.

Principle number two of Lazar's theory of feminist discourse analysis was used to analyse the relationship between gender, ideology, and power in the novel. The goal of FCDA is to investigate how textual representations of gendered social practices and interactional tactics of conversation contribute to the production, resistance, and counter-resistance of power and dominance (Lazar, 2007). A news report from a rape case wrote "According to Agni (not her real name), the university seemed more interested in protecting its good image than in pursuing justice" (The Conversation, 2019). The sentence showed that the university, as the one with power, allowed sexual harassment to happen by not utilizing the law to give justice to the victim, instead protecting the professor who perpetuated the crime to protect the good image of their institution. The language used in this case sent out a message that women do not belong in public spaces – in this case, educational institutions, is on an equal footing with men. Women are obligated to do constant self-surveillance and are expected to rely on men for protection from other men who may be sexually aggressive.

This study was motivated by several reasons. First is the lack of studies. Some critical studies about gender and ideology have been conducted previously: feminism in children's fantasy fiction (Tapionkaski, 2007), parent's identity and motherhood through Instagram (Mazer 2020), gender representation in Pakistani Movies (Sohail, Sanzar, & Mehboob 2020), role and position of women in Turkish novel (Ullah et al., 2021), representation of gender ideology issues in speech (Suprayogi, Lestiani & Sa'adah, 2023), the role and influence of gender ideology in power and achievement (Stefani & Prati, 2020), and critical discourse analysis of feminism in Chinese online novel by Zhou (2021). While the above studies presented two critical analyses of feminism in novels, both focus on how the roles of women are exercised through language analysis used in both printed and online novels. This study, however, aims to analyse how gender ideology that creates a power imbalance in Iranian society is represented through Freidoune Sahebjam's novel *Stoning of Soraya M*. Second, the recent incident in the capital city of Iran, Tehran, where a woman died with a fractured skull after being detained by the 'moral police' prior to the accusation of not properly obeying the clothing regulations. This story sparked an interest in investigating how women are portrayed in literature, which prompted the writing of this article.

The story of Soraya is representative of the experiences of women who were or are in similar circumstances as a result of the persecution of the government. The objective of this study is to analyse

the representation of structural gendered ideology on the power imbalance between men and women in Iranian society through novel *Stoning of Soraya M.*

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method to explore the use of language to portray gender ideology and power toward women by employing a phenomenological case study in Iranian society. Data were analysed through the lens of the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. More specifically, the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The primary data source for this study is a novel, *Stoning of Soraya M.* The novel was first published on September 12, 1990. The novel consists of 115 pages back to back.

In analysis, tools such as description, interpretation, and explanation were used. The description was the phase concerned with the formal characteristics of the text – this was achieved by describing words, phrases, dialogues, or narratives from *Stoning of Soraya M* novel. Interpretation was the process of discovering the relationship between text and interaction, perceiving the text as a resource in the reproduction process. Tracing the influence of ideology towards power and gender in *Stoning of Soraya M* novel calls for deeper dive into the socio-cultural context of the novel as well as the background of the author. Therefore, Lazar's theory of feminist discourse analysis was used to analyse the relationship between gender, ideology, and power in the novel. FCDA principle number two: gender is ideological structure, was employed to study how societal structure shaped gender ideology, resulting in power dynamics that put women in disadvantaged positions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender role ideology is defined as an individual's attitudes to how the roles of women and men are and should be shaped by sex (Somech & Drazh-Zahavy, 2016). Hence, gender roles are not based on biological differences but rather on social and psychological constructions. Attitudes regarding gender roles are what determine the distribution of men and women into various social roles in society. As a result, these attitudes affect individuals' occupational choices, the type of role they play as a worker, spouse, or parent, and many other aspects of life. On a macro level, they influence work–family relations and labour force patterns.

### Results

Even in places where laws prohibit overt gender discrimination, Lazar (2007) argues that women continue to confront overt displays of dominance or the threat of them. Simultaneously, in (late) modern civilizations, a subtle and ostensibly innocuous discourse-based form of power is deployed in a ubiquitous and deceptive manner. This kind of power is constructed and distributed through networks of relationships; it self-regulates and produces subjects and objects. This claim was evident in *Stoning of Soraya M* novel. The relationship between gender ideology and power was structurally held together by the law of the country, namely its Constitution, its Civil Code, and its Penal Code.

**Table 1. Structural gender ideology in *Stoning of Soraya M* novel**

Hegemony and patriarchal culture	19 excerpts
The Constitution	31 excerpts
The Civil Code	5 excerpts
The Penal Code	23 excerpts

The table exhibits that nineteen excerpts from the novel supported the notion that hegemony and patriarchal culture make it challenging for women to attain authority and power. Thirty-one excerpts indicate that the Constitution played a substantial role in maintaining the gender ideology of society. Five excerpts describe how the country's Civil Code supports gender ideology, while twenty-three excerpts describe how the country's Penal Code upholds gender ideology.

### Discussion

#### *Male hegemony and patriarchal culture*

Women enjoyed significant freedom before the revolution, including the right to vote in 1963 and experienced a significant increase in urban women's employment. However, upon the establishment of

the new republic, the country's civil code and the new constitution strengthened men's privileges in terms of marriage, divorce, and authority over their female relatives (Moghadam, 2018).

Excerpt 1

*One day Zahra's parents **decided** she was old enough to get married..... (p58)*

The word *decided* is employed in a subtle manner in order to uphold a higher position of superiority over women. The relationship naturalizes patriarchal ideology by placing a man in a position of superiority over a woman. In this sense, an agreement of marriage is always between a girl's father and spouse. Consequently, she will move out of the house she shares with her father as soon as she is given to her husband. A woman's existence is normalized as one who is subservient and docile when the passive sentence highlights the parents instead of Zahra.

Excerpt 2

*"My dear friends, I suggest that we **men**, who live here in **dignity**, **absolve** ourselves from this task. Let the women take care of it. (p106)*

The use of words such as *men*, *dignity*, and *absolve* emphasize the power dynamic between men and women. Men are able to absolve themselves of their responsibilities and assign them to women, as implied by the word *absolve*. Soraya and three other women from the community were unable to disobey the demand and hence completed the task.

Excerpt 3

*"What I think is not important. **We voted**, and the **decision was made**. I have to see that it is carried out". (p108)*

When used in its most literal definition, "patriarchy" refers to the system of authority exercised by a parent, the father of a race, or the chief who promotes male supremacy and discrimination against women. Lazar (2007) argued that the impacts of male hegemony and patriarchal culture make it difficult for women to hold power. The above sentence demonstrates the society's culture, which shows that power is given to men to a greater extent. The word *we* in the phrase *we voted* refers to the village's men. The phrase *decision was made* shows that traditionally, women were almost entirely excluded from conversations involving decision-making. The event in question took place after the stoning had been carried out. Due to the fact that Soraya was a sinner, the people concluded that her remains should not be buried anywhere within the village vicinity. Zahra, who was Soraya's closest friend and a member of her family, was not present in the conversation but was obligated to accept the decision approved by the men, as the phrase *have to* and *carried out* emphasize. Excerpts above demonstrate that in numerous situations, women have remained impoverished, illiterate, and marginalized (Effiong, Eyo & Effiong, 2021). Similarly, the society in which the female protagonists of the novel *Stoning of Soraya M* existed, presented women with disadvantageous circumstances.

Concerning power dynamics and gender ideology, a total of 19 found in the novel showed that society is male-dominated, resulting in women being placed in a marginalized position as more power was held by the men as the patriarch figures of the household by tradition. As Lazar (2007) has suggested, traditional gender ideology encourages power imbalance, which comes in various forms, particularly in women who live in patriarchal cultures such as the countries of South East Asia (Niaz & Hassan, 2006), South Asia (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2019), Middle East and North Africa (Moghadam, 2020). As a result, it formed situations where women found themselves in disadvantaged positions.

### ***Legal Aspects of gender ideology: The Constitution***

The introduction of the constitution wrote, "Women regain their crucial and invaluable duty of motherhood in raising vanguard, ideological human beings, while they, themselves, are comrades of men in active fields of 'life'...". As a result, women came to be classified as mothers whose responsibility was to give birth to individuals who adhered to the ideology of the governing regime. The constitution suggested that the family, as a place where the primary unit from which society is developed, was required to comply with the ecclesiastical authority structure.

Principle 2 of the constitution wrote that the duty that comes along with leadership, together with man's dignity, exalted value, and freedom, are all related to God. This principle attributed leadership and interpretation of the law to the hands of the mullah, who were linked to God. As a result, various interpretations made it possible for these individuals to perpetrate any crime against the citizens, particularly against women, in the name of religion. This case was endorsed in the excerpts shown below.

Excerpt 1

*“According to **God’s law, no woman** who has been stoned to death **has the right** to interment. That’s what Sheik Hassan says.” (p108)*

The excerpt presented above exemplifies how religion can be used to manipulate women. The phrase *God's law* represents the highest law that can rule out any other laws in the country. The phrase *no woman* and *has no right* demonstrate explicitly that the law was irrefutable, especially to women—the dialogue was between Zahra and the Machdi Ebrahim, the village's chief. Sheikh Hassan, who had no prior religious education, assumed the title of *mullah* and imposed his will on the entire village in the name of God and the holy book. He exerted his power over the men, and the men of the community used their authority to compel the women to submit to the *mullah*.

Excerpt 2

*“Soraya Khanum, we are here alone, just the two of us. I am **a man of God**; I am like the **Prophet**; you can confide in me. What do you have to say?” (p25).*

Article 2, verse 1 stated, "The one and only God (there is no god but God); sovereignty and canonization are His, and everyone must subject to His authority." Sheik Hassan reminded Soraya that, as *the man of God*, he is *like the Prophet*, comparable to a Prophet; therefore, everything that came out of his mouth was inspired by God since he was the vessel of God's words. Such phrases are utilized to reinforce the woman for stereotypical gendered roles that she accepts, believing it is the sole truth (Kayany & Dar, 2019).

Excerpt 3

*“... But what more can I do? This is the **law of men**, the law that men make and say it is the **law of God**” (p78)*

The phrase *law of men* expresses how men in the village exploit God's name to discriminate against women. The men utilize the laws from the holy book – *the law of God* and the constitution to their benefit. Soraya was falsely accused of adultery, which she did not do. Nevertheless, her husband enlisted the aid of the fake mullah (Sheik Hassan), the village chief (Machdi Ebrahim), and even the widower (Hashem), whom Soraya had aided, to frame her for a crime she did not commit. In the final section of the discourse, the *law of God* was utilized to take advantage of women and encourages them to remain silent in the face of fate (the word of God), which is indisputable in a society with a strong religious tradition. Hence, it is practical to hold on to and (re)produce male-centered ideology in the name of a pseudo-religion since doing so is convenient (Lazar, 2007).

Excerpt 4

*“It was **God’s will**, and as Mr. Lajevardi has just reminded us, **all we did was apply his law**”.* (p104)

The phrase *God's will*, exposes how the name of God is exploited to justify the crime done to women. The argumentative approach of discursive reasoning is employed through the usage of the phrase *all we did was apply his law*. It simulates how recognition, transformation, and analysis of arguments are exploited by certain groups (men) in order to maintain justification or legitimization of the exclusion and discrimination of some groups (women) has the goal of providing a justification for a particular position and serves the purpose of maintaining rationale for the exclusion and discrimination of certain groups (Wodak, 2002).

## Excerpt 5

*She knew that it was over and that the “law,” such as men had willed it, **had been carried out** (p78).*

According to the evidence offered, the word *law* that the men proclaimed cannot be denied because it originates from God and hence has to be executed. The phrase *had been carried out* showed that every part of society practiced it, and both men and women took part in it (Scollon, 2001) which in turn, kept the ideas, social orders, and hegemonies of men in place.

## Excerpt 6

*“**I am not the one** who is throwing this stone.... **It is God who is guiding** my arm.... **It is he who commands me** and the revenge I am meting out is not for me, but for our imam, revenge for the heinous crime this woman has committed. (p98)*

The phrase *it is God who is guiding* demonstrates how men used God's name to acquit themselves of their crimes. The stoning of Soraya is a premeditated act by men to eliminate her for the advantage of her husband. The fake *mullah*, Sheik Hassan, holding the holy book in his left hand, picked up a stone from the ground and delivered a speech before tossing it to Soraya. He asserted that God, the Almighty and powerful, guided his hand as he threw the stone. The power that God had bestowed upon His servant gave the men a justification of their doing by the phrase *I am not the one* and *who commands me* because they acted on behalf of the constitution of the country and the law of God.

Lazar (2007) stated that even in places where laws prohibit overt gender discrimination, women continue to face overt displays of dominance or the danger of them. This theory is demonstrated in *Stoning of Soraya M*, where gender ideology is exercised to create a power imbalance with the aid of the constitution. In total, 31 excerpts from the novel referenced the country's constitution; all pointed toward the idea that the law was liable to power abuse. Evidently, in the post-revolution society, women were marginalized by the twist of the legal constitution.

**Legal Aspects of gender ideology: The Civil Code**

Following the 1979 revolution, special civil courts superseded the Family Protection Courts in the spring of 1979, where a religious judge was responsible for determining whether or not a couple had the legal right to divorce. Article 942 of the Civil Code allowed men to have multiple permanent and temporary wives, and this law was reflected through the following data.

## Excerpt 1

*Whereupon Morteza took a sigheh, as the **law stipulated**, a second wife, who moved into the house and bore him four more children (p18)*

The words *law stipulated* above emphasized the importance of law in the relationship between men and women. The law systematically granted more power to men to have more than one wife. However, the same law does not apply to women throughout the novel. Soraya's father desires to have more offspring than his wife can give. He resorts to taking a much younger woman as his second wife to have more children after his first wife's health deteriorates due to losing excessive strength to child-bearing.

## Excerpt 2

*In the village, nothing changed, except that the news spread that the **new regime** had once again **authorized men** to have several wives. Without wasting a minute, Ghorban-Ali turned his back on his wife and no longer even touched her (p21)*

The above discourse explained how the constitution supported gender ideology in society. The words *new regime* referred to the changes in the country's politics following the 1979's revolution. Gender ideology was ingrained in the people's day-to-day life because the government maintains its existence. The law granted power only men (with the words *authorized men*) to have more than one wife while women are not permitted to have more than one husband.

## Excerpt 3

*Morteza Ramazani, who had married rather late in life.....Shokat had had her first child when she was thirteen.... (p18)*

Physical violence against women and girls, sexual harassment, and denigration of women and girls are all examples of overt forms of gender inequality. Other overt manifestations of gender inequality include exclusionary gatekeeping social practices (Lazar, 2007). Article 1210 of the Civil Code said that girls were mature and legally responsible when they were nine lunar years old. This put girls the most socially and legally vulnerable people. The phrase *had her first child when she was thirteen* reflected how gender ideology placed women in a position of disadvantage. The fact that Soraya's mother gave birth to her first child at the age of thirteen indicates that she was married before her thirteenth birthday, whereas her husband *married later in life*. As a result of this practice, Soraya could not complete tasks required of young women, such as receiving an education.

## Excerpt 4

*Soraya was almost a young woman, she was thirteen... (p18)*

Like Soraya's mother and aunt, *she was thirteen* when her parents decided to marry her off, the legal age that the constitution approved. Article 1041 of the Civil Code stated: "Marriage of girls before the age of 13 and boys before the age of 15 is contingent upon the permission of the guardian and upon the condition of the child's best interests as determined by a competent court." Per this rule, it became unlawful for married women to continue their education in institutions of higher learning unless their fathers or husbands permitted them to do so. Young females who were coerced into marriage were not permitted to attend school, and married children's school attendance required the permission of either their husband or their father (WNCRI, 2020).

## Excerpt 5

*Like Zahra, Soraya had a basic education, and she tried to pass it on to her children. Like Zahra, she was an impeccable housekeeper, and brought her children up to be neat and clean. Like Zahra, she did not linger in the village streets and spoke to no one unless spoken to (p59).*

Article 1105 specified that the husband was the head of the household and that the wife should not leave the house without her husband's permission. Hence, women did not require higher education, as the phrase *Soraya had a basic education* had stated. Due to the fact that Zahra and Soraya were married off at such a tender age, they were never given opportunities to complete their education. Women received greater education in the domestic sphere than in academic subjects. Women were encouraged to be exceptional housewives who devoted themselves to care for their families. Additionally, article 1108 affirmed that a woman was not entitled to alimony if she refused to perform her duties as a wife without a legitimate reason. In spite of that, Zahra *tried to pass it on to her children* in efforts to challenge the patriarchal order and gender ideology that prevailed in the community by trying to educate the next generation.

The Civil Code contradicted article 20 of the Constitution which stated that all citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoyed the protection of the law and all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. For example, Article 1117 stated that "Husband can prohibit his wife from any profession or industry that is incompatible with interests of family or their dignity." According to the appearance of this article, the basic principle of existing the right of employment for women is approved. However, it has allowed men to prohibit their wives' employment under certain conditions (Shirvani, Shenasaee & Mat Basir, 2017). However, Article 4 of the Constitution wrote that religious principles could take the place of any part of the law, which meant that all civil, criminal, financial, and other laws and rules could be set aside in front of religious law. As a result, religious laws overruled previous laws, which could be interpreted differently by one group to exercise their power over the other.

**Legal Aspects of gender ideology: The Penal Code**

Punishment, religion, and institution have a complex relationship, particularly in a country that does not separate religious influence from its law. It is essential to define actions that go against ideas of purity and holiness, especially regarding sexual behaviours. Religion brings people into large moral communities that work together. It can also play a critical role in regulating a wide range of behaviours that could threaten social cohesion, even if they do not seem to hurt anyone. Therefore, the dividing lines between religious laws and the law of human rights sometimes take work to point out. Consequently, what kinds of things are morally wrong and could be punished by the law and how those who break the law should be punished are subject to debate.

## Excerpt 1

*"I told Hashem that I had prepared his supper, that I had done the laundry, and that tonight I would take the children's clothes home to iron. We did **smile at each other**. You all know that since Firouzeh died I've been taking care of her family. Everyone knows that (pg 61).*

Article 63-102 of the Penal Code dictated adultery as a crime. Depending on the degree of the crimes, the punishment varied from lashing to execution and stoning. The excerpt pictured Soraya's crime was that she, as a married woman with a perfectly healthy and caring husband committed adultery by seducing a widower who had just lost his wife. However, the severity of her crime was only represented by the phrase *smile at each other*. Unfortunately, she did not have equal power before the law to defend herself because three other men have admitted to being the witnesses.

## Excerpt 2

*"Soraya, **two men present** in this room are accusing you of conduct unworthy of a wife and mother. Can you prove they're not telling the truth?" (p64).*

The phrase *two men present* above was another example of the complex relation between power and gender. Power relations are a struggle over interests, which are kept and fought against in different ways, to different degrees, and in different ways big and small depending on the situation (Lazar, 2007). In this case, the interest was the accusation of adultery made towards Soraya. According to Article 74-76 Penal Code, when women served as witnesses, they were accorded half the amount of respect as men, but when they were found guilty, they were subject to harsher penalties. Equality before the law that the Constitution claimed, did not apply to Soraya's case because men in the village used religious law to punish her. According to the law, she required at least four female witnesses to match the power of the two men.

## Excerpt 3

*"We have **unanimously** decided that the guilty party, Soraya Manutchehri, shall be stoned before the day ends, until she is dead" (p75).*

Similar to excerpt 2, data from excerpt above highlighted the complexity of power relations in the society. The literal meaning word *unanimously* is 'without opposition' or 'with the agreement of all people involved'. More than three parties were involved in the case: Soraya, Her husband, the village chief, the widower and the fake *mullah*. Even though the Constitution protected Soraya's rights as a citizen, the religious law outlawed equality before the law. Hence, the unanimity of decision taking denounced her civil rights as a citizen of the country.

## Excerpt 4

*"Sheik Hassan, our mullah, is apparently aware of the situation. Now I, too, am aware of it, and other people in the village as well. **We shall be the judges**". (p65)*

According to Durrant and Poppelwell (2017), it is not easy to distinguish between religious law and human rights legislation. So, whether certain activities are morally wrong and should be punished by the law is debatable. It was also challenging to decide how lawbreakers should be punished. The phrase *we shall be the judge* revealed the existence of a loophole in the law that could be utilized by a



particular group - such as men, to exercise power over the other (women). Men in the village determined Soraya's punishment without referencing any Criminal Code article. In addition, no proper interrogation or questioning was conducted. By discussion and voting, the men determined that her crime merited the death penalty by stoning.

All in all, 23 excerpts from the novel expressed how the Penal Code maintained the uneven power distribution between men and women in the country. Gender ideology was enforced and maintained constitution and the law. Power relations are a conflict over interests, which are maintained and opposed in context-specific ways that vary in their modalities, extents, and degrees of explicitness. Overt manifestations of gender inequality include social practices of exclusionary gatekeeping, physical violence against women and girls, and sexual harassment and denigration of them. Even in civilizations where legal means are available, such overt expressions of dominance (or the danger of them) remain a reality for women in many societies (Lazar, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

Gender ideology and power presented themselves as a theme of the novel as a reflection of the society where the novel took place. The 1979 revolution brought about comprehensive shifts in all aspects of society, including the socio-cultural. Women were placed in a disadvantaged position through the use of secular and religious laws. *Stoning of Soraya M* novel demonstrated that gender ideology in the novel is structural. The findings and discussions concluded that the country's laws, including the Constitution, the Civil Code, and the Criminal Code, contradicted one another, creating a complicated legal environment for women. While the constitution guaranteed equal civil rights for men and women, religious law superseded other laws and was frequently abused by individuals to commit crimes against women. In addition, the country's patriarchal culture also helped sustain the existence of gender ideology within the society.

Using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, this study examined gender ideology and power in Sahebjam's Novel *Stoning of Soraya M*. The study shed light on how patriarchal structure and legal constitution supported gender ideology and power imbalance between men and women. The analysis of the content and context of the novel revealed that language and discursive practices are utilized to construct the identity of an individual or group. It is also asserted that language is the fundamental instrument for exercising power. The approach utilized in this study could be adapted to different types of media discourse in order to uncover ideology and social phenomena in society. Potential researchers may also perform a comparative study by comparing literature during the revolution and recent literary work from Iran to see the extent of changes in gender ideology and power in Iranian society.

## REFERENCES

- Cerrato, J., & Cifre, E. (2018). Gender inequality in household chores and work-family conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1330. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01330>.
- Dahl, R.A. (1957). *The concept of power*. [https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/Dahl\\_Power\\_1957.pdf](https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/Dahl_Power_1957.pdf).
- Durrant, R., & Poppelwell, Z. (2017). *Religion, crime and punishment*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64428-8>.
- Kayany, U., & Dar, S.R. (2019). Sustenance of patriarchal ideology: A feminist critical discourse analysis of musical discourse. *Erevna: Journal of Linguistics & Literature, 3*(2), 57-70.
- Koester, D. (2015). Gender and power. *Developmental Leadership Program*. [https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/DLP\\_2015\\_Gender-and-Power.pdf](https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/DLP_2015_Gender-and-Power.pdf).
- Kroska, A. (2007). Gender ideology and gender role ideology. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosg019>.
- Lazar, M. M. (2007) Feminist critical discourse analysis: Articulating a feminist discourse praxis1. *Critical Discourse Studies, 4*(2), 141–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701464816>.
- Li, X., Cao, H., Curran, M. A., Fang, X., & Zhou, N. (2020). Traditional gender ideology, work family conflict, and marital quality among Chinese dual-earner couples: A moderated mediation model. *Sex Roles, 83*(9–10), 622–635. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01125-1>.
- Mazer, R. (2020). *Redefining Parenthood: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Identity Curation on Instagram by Mothers and Gender Non-Conforming Parents* (thesis). [https://arts.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/21/Mazer\\_R\\_Thesis\\_Final%20Draft.pdf](https://arts.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/21/Mazer_R_Thesis_Final%20Draft.pdf).

- Moghadam, V. M. (2018). *Iranian women, work, and the gender regime. The Cairo review of global affairs*. <https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/iranian-women-work-and-the-gender-regime/>.
- Niaz, U., & Hassan, S. (2006). Culture and mental health of women in South-East Asia. *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 5(2), 118–120.
- Rabbiah, S. (2015). *Language as a tool for communication and cultural reality discloser*. <https://osf.io/preprints/inarxiv/nw94m/download>.
- Rahmi. (2016). Gender and language use. *INTELEKTUALITA*, 3(1), 79-93. <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/242950-none-fad2364c.pdf>.
- Rustiyani, R., Setyowati H, A., & Widisanti S., N. M. (2019). The influence of power relations which give rise to gender inequality on the main character in the novel the red queen by Philippa Gregory. *Journal Albion: Journal of English Literature, Language, and Culture*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.33751/albion.v1i1.1119>.
- Sjölander, A.E. (2009). Lazar, Michelle. M. (ed.) Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 8(1), 159–162. doi: 10.1075/jlp.8.1.09sjo.
- Sohail, S., Sanzar, B., & Mehboob, S. (2020). A critical study of feminist critical discourse analysis of changing gender pre-defined expectation in Pakistani movies. *University of Wah Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 43–64. <https://uwjss.org.pk/downloads/v3/issue2/030204.pdf>.
- Somech, A., & Drach-Zahavy, A. (2016). Gender role ideology. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss205>.
- Stefani, S., & Prati, G. (2020). *The role of gender ideology in explaining gender differences in power and achievement values*. 10.31234/osf.io/m6dsc.
- Tapionkaski, S. (2007). Feminist critical discourse analysis and children's fantasy-fiction modelling new approach. *Research Gate*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242185953\\_Feminist\\_critical\\_discourse\\_analysis\\_and\\_children's\\_fantasy\\_fiction\\_-\\_modelling\\_a\\_new\\_approach\\_1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242185953_Feminist_critical_discourse_analysis_and_children's_fantasy_fiction_-_modelling_a_new_approach_1).
- The Conversation (2019). *#MeToo has skipped Indonesia—here's why*. <https://theconversation.com/metoo-has-skipped-indonesia-heres-why-112530>.
- Tonsing, J. C., & Tonsing, K. N. (2019). Understanding the role of patriarchal ideology in intimate partner violence among South Asian women in Hong Kong. *International Social Work*, 62(1), 161–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872817712566>.
- Ullah, M.A., Ayub, M., Kazmi, A., & Raza, A. (2021). 10 minutes 38 seconds in this strange world. *Psychology and Education* 58(5): 5770-5782. <http://psychologyandeducation.net/pae/index.php/pae/article/view/6491/5433>.
- Ungaretti, J. & Etchezar, E. (2013). Gender role ideology according to sex, acceptance of women's rights and gay marriage. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(15), 40-45. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/159285374.pdf>.
- Weatherall, A. (2003). *Gender, language and discourse*. Routledge. Available at: [https://www.fib.unair.ac.id/jdownloads/Materi%20Kuliah/Magister%20Kajian%20Sastra%20dan%20Budaya/Analisis%20Wacana/gender\\_language\\_and\\_discourse\\_ann\\_weatherall\\_routledge\\_2002.pdf](https://www.fib.unair.ac.id/jdownloads/Materi%20Kuliah/Magister%20Kajian%20Sastra%20dan%20Budaya/Analisis%20Wacana/gender_language_and_discourse_ann_weatherall_routledge_2002.pdf).
- Wodak, R. (2002). Aspects of critical discourse analysis. *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Linguistik*, 36, 5-31.
- Women NCRI. (2020). *Violence against women in Iran state-sponsored and institutionalized*.: <https://women.ncr-iran.org/2020/11/22/violence-against-women-in-iran/>.
- Zhou, Z. (2021). Feminist critical theory: An analysis of the changing image of women in female leader online novel. *Proceedings of the 2021 3rd International Conference on Literature, Art and Human Development (ICLAHD)*.