

# Gender Representation in A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Corpus-Based Stylistic Analysis

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## Abstract

The current study consists of corpus-based stylistic analysis of a novel 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' (2008) by Khaled Hosseini. This study aims to examine gender representation in the selected book. The researcher utilizes Dale Spender's theoretical framework. The research adopts a mixed-method approach that blends qualitative methods with quantitative one. The focus of the study is the analysis of adjectives, verbs, and taboo terms that have been used with both male and female characters in the novel. The occurrences of the chosen categories, together with their concordances, are extracted from a specialized corpus created from one novel's worth of text using AntConc version 4.2.0. The study demonstrates that men frequently abuse women physically and verbally. The frequency analysis of adjectives, verbs and taboo terms has shown that male characters are presented as powerful, immoral, authoritative and dominating, whereas female characters are oppressed, victimized, and weak. 42% of adjectives having unfavorable meanings in different contexts are employed with females, thus underrepresenting them in this novel; on the other hand, 53% of adjectives positively depict the male characters relating to their strength and masculinity. Moreover, 40% of verbs are found with males depicting man's authority and autonomous status, while 54% verbs directly correlate with women's inferior status. The taboo terms are used mostly by male characters to devalue and degrade others especially females in this novel. This research is expected to pave new paths for upcoming researchers to understand new perspectives of stylistics and portrayal of gender roles in Afghani culture.

**Keywords:** Corpus-based, Gender representation, Stylistic analysis

## 1 Introduction

Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) define Stylistics as "the study of style"(p.2). Stylistics is

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concerned with the way of writing and the meaning of different literary works. Crystal (1972) defines Stylistics as the orderly, situationally particular and intra-language variety. Stylistics is generally thought of as encompassing the use of literary frameworks and techniques for studying literature and the style and language of literary works (Ho, 2011). It examines a text from a linguistic perspective. It describes how a word, phrase or sound is employed in a peculiar, distinctive manner. So, any distinguishable aspect of language is a stylistic aspect. There can be various stylistic approaches, as the style can come in various forms that can be examined from diverse perspectives. The current study adopts a corpus-based stylistic analysis rather than the conventional analysis method. A corpus is any collection "of more than a text (Wilson 2009). It is an accumulation of language texts that are naturally occurring. From a linguistic perspective, it is a text collection available in computer-readable format. Thus, corpora are a vast computerised collection of texts. Corpus Linguistics involves analysing an enormous amount of electronic language data using software tools (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Wilson, 2001). Thus, Corpus Linguistics is a means of increasing the replicability and falsifiability of stylistic analyses.

Corpus Linguistics methods are highly recognised in stylistics for managing the vast number of texts and linking the style of authors or texts. Investigating literary works using the corpus method has often fallen within the 'Corpus Stylistics' category. Corpus Linguistics+ (literary) Stylistics=Corpus Stylistics? (Imran et al., 2018). Corpus Stylistics is the blend of analytical practices and methods. Corpus Stylistics employ a few corpus techniques, including using computerized literary works and implementing statistical strategies for analysis (Wynne, 2005). Corpus-based investigation assists in construing the reader's insights about literary works (Biber, 2011). Furthermore, the objectivity and reliability of the results are achieved by using corpus tools in research (Biber et al., 2011; Ho, 2011). In this sense, corpus stylistics may be seen as an approach that unites language and literature through novel descriptive techniques that adhere to linguistics apparatuses while explaining specific textual aspects and connecting them to literary interpretation (Mahlberg, 2007).

The present study combines stylistics and corpus linguistics to examine the chosen text to determine how this writer represents male and female characters using adjectives, verbs and taboo terms. Although the selected novel has been studied from different perspectives, this field still needs more corpus-based research. The novel selected for research is *A Thousand Saif* (2008) written by Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American writer. This novel encompasses three decades of anti-Soviet Jihad, civil strife and Taliban rule as experienced from the viewpoints of two women. Mariam (one of the protagonists), the rejected illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman, is pushed into marriage at fifteen with Rasheed, who becomes continually violent when she cannot have children. After eighteen years, Rasheed gets married Laila (the second female protagonist), a fourteen-year-old girl who is intelligent and lively and her parents are killed by rocket fire. Mariam and Laila joined together to confront Rasheed, whose use of violence is protected by law and culture. So, it is a tale of two women who, against their wishes, marry the same person. Because of their interaction, both females develop a close relationship between them. This novel has won massive praise from critics since the time of its publication, and it is considered as a fundamental examination of Afghanistan's history and its current culture. The writer paints a vivid picture of oppression in which women are heavily dependent on their male members of the family, and having male offspring is the only way to achieve a respectable social position. In short, it is a heart-wrenching female-centered story that depicts the struggle Afghan women face both at home and in society. Written in the backdrop of pre and post-Taliban war, the story is about the sufferings of women in male-oriented Afghani society. The central subject of the novel objects to the Afghan people's conventional and patriarchal mentality, which treats women as objects that belong to their husbands and are controlled by them (Ramphiphatthamrong, 2020, p.53).

The purpose of this study is to explore the gender representation in 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'

and to provide interpretation based on it, by using corpus as a tool to enhance the qualitative interpretation in addition to quantitative results. The current study attempted to investigate the following question using corpus-based analysis of the selected novel. How gender depiction is accomplished using adjectives, verbs and taboo terms in the chosen work of Hosseini?

## 2 Literature Review

The Corpus-based methodology has markedly altered the stylistic study. Additionally, it has further improved research reliability (Biber & Douglas, 2005). A corpus-based analysis is an essential empirical method for examining diverse language patterns in literary works (Biber, 2011). Corpus stylistics analysis is a purely objective statistical method that, at its best, is directed by a somewhat subjective process of comprehension (Crystal, 1972). It applies the corpus linguistics tools for the analysis of texts and mixes it with the percepts of stylistics. Corpus stylistic research is typically seen as a relatively recent innovation: a continuation of previous linguistic corpus-based studies which concentrated on more conventional issues of lexical and syntactic variation in use (Biber, 2005, p.20). Wynne and Prytz (2005) have claimed that such study is stimulating new perspectives for the analysis of literary language. Therefore, using corpus-based methodologies in literature enables a more significant, wide and in-depth analysis of the fundamental ideas incorporated into various linguistic forms while also contributing to the study of literary texts' stylistic elements.

At the outset of the 20th century, when an entirely new age for women in the West began to emerge, people worldwide started to speak out about the challenges women faced in a misogynistic society. Many Afghani writers were greatly impressed by the messages of new, surfacing voices on women's right and independence. They included them in unconventional and daring roles previously limited to men. Among them, some international Afghani writers like Maryam Mehboob, Asne Seierstad and Khaled Hosseini are those who observed that Afghani women are emerging, rebelling and redefining themselves despite being oppressed and subservient (Imran & Hart, 2018). Especially, Khaled Hosseini, in his works, describes the battle of Afghani women against patriarchal tyrants. Hearty (2011) explains that the patriarchal ideology holds that men are structurally and physically superior to women and that men ought to exercise dominance over them. Men are also believed to be able to run societal matters while women are confined to domestic chores. In other words, men are made to exercise authority and women are born to be in subjugated position. Despite modernisation, social taboos persist in numerous nations. Trudgill (2001) says that taboos deal with forbidden or suppressed behaviors ostensibly for illogical reasons. These are the actions that are seen to be illicit, immoral or wrong. Afghanistan ranks highest in the list of countries where women are mostly at risk due to societal taboos (The Express Tribune, 2011). Thus, in male dominated society, women are taken as an object. The women are commodified by being purchased and sold as brides (Mahlberg, 2007).

Arslan, Mehmood, and Haroon (2022) analyze four books produced by different writers and investigate how language variation used to indicate gender discrepancies to convey subjective and objective situations. The quantitative corpus analysis showed that majority of the adjectives used to denote the feminine gender were mild and empathetic whereas the males were depicted as dominating and governed by the usage of words that separate masculine and feminine composition. With the use of corpus linguistics tool Wmatrix and feminist theories of Sara Mills, the segregation of the female characters in a corpus of one novel from *Final Flight* from Sanaa was quantitatively analyzed (Saif Al-Nakeeb, 2018). The study revealed that females were presented in the term of their physical appeal and sexual orientation whereas males were introduced in terms of their colors, physical strength, talent, persona and degree of power (either physical or social). Trudgil (2001) accumulated the corpus of Shakespeare's entire tragedies as well as the corpus of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for reference corpus. He employed both methods (qualitative and quantitative) in his research. With the help of a frequency list and concordance lines, he examined the portrayal of

men and women in these two corpora. Man was shown as a superior, smart, and courageous character whereas woman was portrayed as a helpless, foolish and cowardly creature.

Specific language choices are used to express gendered language. Researchers looked at the frequency of specific words that were used by male and female writers in their blogs which indicated that male bloggers used prepositional phrases more frequently and female bloggers used noun phrases frequently (Yousaf et al., 2019). Based on the study's conclusions, the assumption was established that female bloggers are more objective than male bloggers and portray gender differences through language traits. Using corpus-based comparative stylistic analysis, Azher (2014) examined how gender is expressed regarding attitude and status in British and Pakistani English fiction. It was discovered that gender representation coincides with the culture to which it is related well. British fiction contains data that is positive and well-balanced. In contrast, Pakistani fiction emphasises the supremacy of males and the subordination of females. Online personal advertisements posted by Malaysian adults were examined by Bakar (2013) using corpus to look at various language manifestations of gender identities. He conducted a qualitative analysis of the traits of identity categorization and manifestations of attitude towards masculinity and femininity. His examination of linguistic materials revealed that in Malaysian personal ads, masculinities are portrayed through physically fit and sensitive new-age males, whereas femininities are shown as sympathetic and powerful.

The studies mentioned above demonstrate that various gender-based studies have already been undertaken in corpus stylistics. The current research differs from the earlier research because this novel has yet to be investigated using the theoretical consideration of Dale Spender, and corpus has not been used as a tool for stylistic analysis. So, the current study attempts to fill the void by analyzing the representation of male and female characters with adjectives, verbs and taboo terms and by applying the framework of Australian writer and researcher Dale Spender. The current study is also corpus-based.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

The current study has adopted the theoretical framework of Dale Spender's Male Dominance to respond to the proposed research question. Dominance theory indicates that males are more likely to rule over females with their words in various contexts. Dale Spender has studied how language and gender relate. She says that language reveals a society's hierarchy of authority and power. Spender's dominance theory postulates that men and women can interact with different languages because of their unequal power relations. She proposes that how men and women speak with each other is responsible for the variation in language use. In her book *Man-Made Language* (1980), Dale Spender proposed that our social life is explained with the help of language that is prejudiced against women. Spender's male dominance is based on the concept that men historically have more influence and verbal control over women. Furthermore, she explains that males are constantly described with terms like professionals. Still, women are always described with phrases like physical attractiveness and words used for domestic purposes, which portray women as less competent and incapable of achieving anything. At the same time, men are viewed as more significant. Male dominance may be shown in prejudiced attitudes about gender, sexuality, and the depiction of females (Sunderland, 2004).

### 4 Methodology

The current research is considered mixed method research because it uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The present study though it is corpus based yet it is descriptive in nature. Descriptive study is the one from where we obtain useful information (Gao, 2009). The effective use of corpora is a unique approach to undertake empirical language analysis for specific outcome. The current study has utilized the plain text of the book *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as

its corpora. The corpus comprises of 106345 total word tokens. The software AntConc version 4.2.0 is used for analyzing and interpreting data. In the AntConc, the usage of Concordance lines and Word lists are chosen for the data analysis: only those traits are employed that assisted in providing answers to the relevant research questions. The concordance lines display keywords in context (KWIC) findings by offering the context of a word with the terms before and afterwards. This feature of KWIC supplies a variety of words like taboo terms, adjectives and verbs to demonstrate the depiction of male or female characters. Moreover, the word list reflects the frequency of such terms.

#### 4.1 Data

To conduct a corpus-based stylistic assessment of an Afghan-American writer to determine how he perceives feminism and whether his interpretations of feminism diverge from Spender's theoretical views. For this reason, the present study used corpus as a tool and created a corpus of 106345-word tokens of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini using AntConc version 4.2.0 as a software. First, the novel is downloaded from the Internet in PDF, and then this PDF is converted into a Word file using the I Love PDF app. The researcher uses the software TagAnt version 2.0.5 to get the required adjectives and verbs. Now, the researcher copy-pasted each chapter into TagAnt plain text. There are 51 chapters of the novel. Each chapter is tagged using terms like JJ for adjectives and VBN and VBD for verbs. After this tagging process, the file is put into the software AntConc (4.2.0). In the section KWIC, there is a need to put the tagged terms JJ, VBN, and VBD. KWIC provides all the adjectives and verbs used in the respective chapters. Manually, the researcher selects the adjectives and verbs used with males and females. Following Baker (2006), the entire book has been erased of excessive punctuation, pauses, etc. and converted to plain text to give exact and appropriate data for software investigation. By employing a text fixer, the word file is changed into txt file. This process is necessary to know the frequency of adjectives, verbs and taboo terms. Now, the entire book in text form is put into the software AntConc. With the aid of the section "Word," the researcher gets the frequency of required terms (taboos, adjectives, verbs) being selected.

#### 4.2 Data Analysis and Discussions

The book has been split into three groups: use of adjectives, use of verbs and use of taboo terms to examine gender representation in the selected novel. The book has been statistically examined by applying corpus as a tool, and then a qualitative analysis has been carried out.

#### 4.3 Adjectives Employed with Male and Female Characters

There are 272 adjectives employed in the chosen novel for men and women. 42% of adjectives are employed with females, revealing negative connotations, while 58% of adjectives are used with males, of which 53% positively represent males 29% show males as immoral and fallacious, and 18% depict males as quick-tempered.

#### 4.4 Adjective depicting Men as Immoral and Deceitful

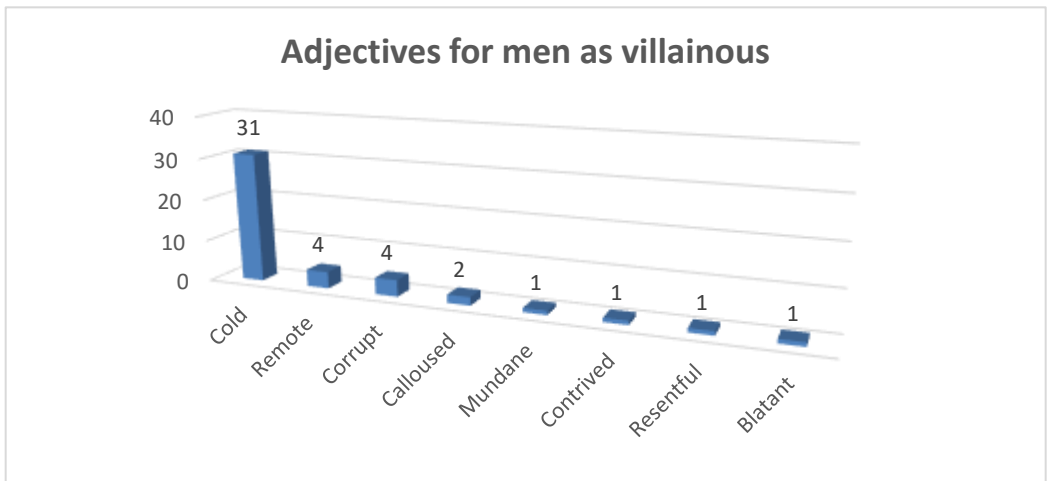
Adjectives are used with male characters (especially Rasheed) to portray them as an insincere and mendacious.

Table 1 - Adjectives portraying males as immoral and deceitful

Adjectives	Frequency
Cold	31
Remote	4
Corrupt	4
Calloused	2
Mundane	1
Contrived	1
Resentful	1
Blatant	1
Total	45

Adjectives used for male characters in the novel demonstrate them as unrighteous, evil and deceitful in a specific context. Particularly, the novel discusses the adjectives that are showing the immoral and deceptive behavior of Rasheed. He deceives Laila by saying that Tariq is dead. Now, Laila has no other option, so she has to marry Rasheed who is thirty years older to her. But years after, when the truth is revealed and Mariam tries to help her out, this act is considered as a way of corruption by such man who does not have any morality and virtue. As it is evident in text, 'I should have known that you'd corrupt her. Rasheed spat at Mariam. He swung the belt'.

Figure 1 - Adjectives depicting men as vicious and wicked



The villainous nature of Rasheed is revealed through his act of physical torturing his wife. When Mariam could not give him baby, his behavior changed towards his wife. He becomes rude and cold having no concern for other's feelings. 'With each disappointment, Rasheed had grown more remote and resentful. Even she cooks a variety of food to please him. But he hates her and shows bitter attitude towards her. 'Two fingers into her mouth and pried it open, then forced the cold hard pebbles into it. Mariam struggled against him, mumbling' Here, Mariam is suffering physical abuse and as a man, Rasheed is depicting his authority and power.

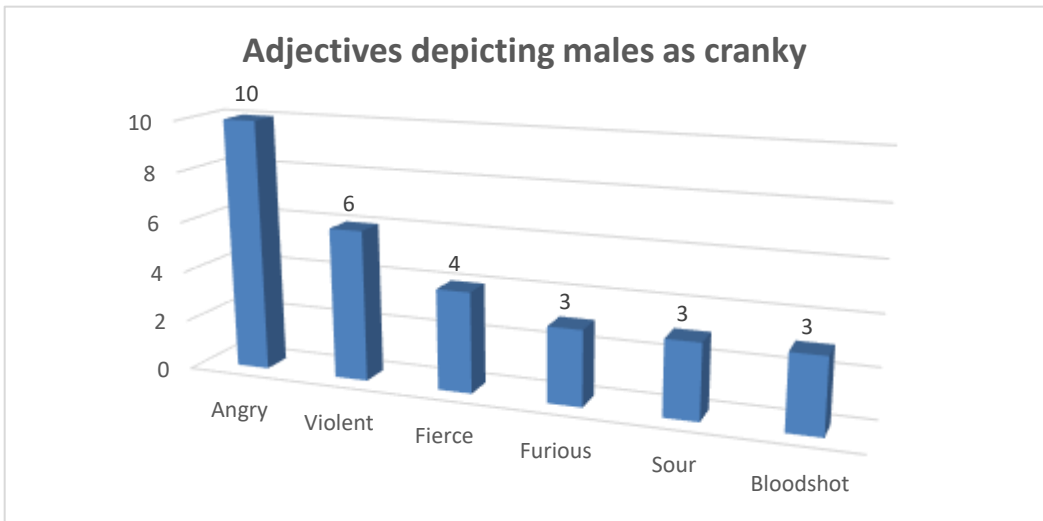
#### 4.5 Adjectives representing Men as a Short-Tempered

Adjectives are demonstrating men as hot-tempered and cranky.

Table 2 - Adjectives showing men as a quick-tempered

Adjectives	Frequency
Angry	10
Violent	6
Fierce	4
Furious	3
Sour	3
Bloodshot	3
Total	29

Figure 2 - Adjectives representing men as ill-tempered



These Adjectives have been used with male character. They show the aggressive nature of male. The main male character of Rasheed has remained in a bad mood throughout the novel. His conduct with female characters, Mariam and Laila was not appropriate. At first, he married to Maryam and spent 18 years of marriage together. Maryam was unable to give an heir to Rasheed. This made Rasheed short temper person because he wanted a son as he lost his son from his first wife. In patriarchal society female is thought to be a baby-making machine. According to Rasheed, Mariam is a useless thing upon whom he can shout and show his anger. From here the things got changed. Maryam blenched whenever Rasheed came home. He used to yell over Mariam at first and then on Laila. This portrays the Patriarchal Society where the man is dominant and powerful and female is weak and submissive. Mariam got the goose bumps in the presence of Rasheed, she tried to avoid things that make Rasheed furious. She used to clean house and cooked food according to Rasheed demands. But nothing pleases Rasheed. He was a fierce person. In front of Rasheed, Mariam stayed silent. She did not argue with him rather she complied with him. The short temperament of male character can be seen through this example. ‘She was startled awake by shouting. Voices downstairs sharp and angry. Mariam couldn’t make out the words’

During Ramadan when Rasheed did not observe fast, he got more furious if Mariam got late in preparing meal. And when he observed fast, he lost his patience, as Ramadan gives us the lesson of patience, the short temper person Rasheed did not bother about that. He thought it to be gratitude upon Islam to observe fast. The following line from the text shows the temperament of Rasheed.

‘Rasheed didn’t observe the fast. A few times he did, he came home in a sour mood’.

As Rasheed is the product of Patriarchal Society where the male displaces his anger on female, so, Rasheed is behaving the same way by extracting his anger on Mariam and Laila. All the men at that time of story are aggressive as the Taliban got Afghanistan in 1996. So the following line represent the violent nature of men.

*'In this gesture, Laila saw rusty bars and unwashed bodies, violent men and crowded halls.'*

#### 4.6 Adjectives Used with Male Characters Having Positive Connotation

Adjectives that are employed with male category with positive connotation.

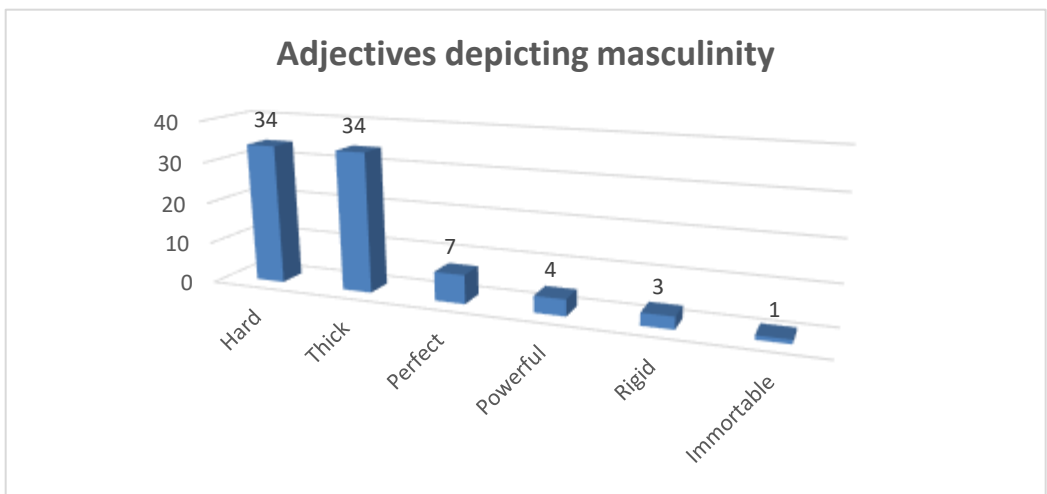
Table 3 - Adjectives portraying men positively

Positive connotation adjectives have been used with male characters to show their physical strength. As in the characteristics of masculinity, the physical strength of man is associated with macho man. Rasheed was an old chauvinist. The following line is taken from the text to show the physical strength of male character;

*'In your mouth, "stop it, Rasheed, I'm "His powerful hands clasped her jaw'*

Here the adjective, powerful is used to display the man power. This line is taken from the context where Rasheed got angry with Mariam. Rasheed was old but as he was male, so he was more powerful and he was having more strength than Mariam.

Figure 3 - Adjectives for men with positive connotation



Adjectives used with male characters portray them as dominating masculine. Their masculinity is demonstrated through the adjectives like powerful, hard, perfect, thick etc. These are frequently used in the text. In man governing society, everything is controlled by men. The male character of Rasheed showed the misogynist attitude. He hates Mariam and always tries to suppress her. In all aspects of the society, we can see that man holds the primary power. In Afghanistan, the females are not allowed to go against their husbands. Their husbands can do whatever they want and there is no one to question them. Rasheed used to beat Mariam. Mariam was the victim of domestic violence but she could not complain to anyone as her family left her on the head of Rasheed.

The exaggerated machismo is displayed by Rasheed. The supremacy of male characters can be seen through the adjectives used. The adjective hard has been used frequently to show the superiority. Rasheed was such a savage person. The grip of man is so strong that a woman can't get rid of that the strength of Rasheed can be shown through the following line. 'The way he



pinned her down, his hard squeezes at her breasts.’

Here, the adjective hard shows the impregnability of the male character. Rasheed took Mariam hard and rammed himself against her body. The above line is taken from the context where Mariam was the victim of sexual abuse. This was the marital rape. According to the definition of marital rape, “the act of intercourse without the consent of the spouse,” Rasheed did the same thing. He did not take the consent of Mariam and Laila. He considered it to be his right to have intercourse anytime he wanted.

According to Russell’s research, traditional and dependent wives are more likely to blame themselves. As they are dependent on their husbands, so they stay with them and endure that sexual abuse. Mariam and Laila did the same thing. Both of them were dependent on Rasheed. Maryam winced back whenever Rasheed came to her room. For men, it is acceptable to force their wives into intercourse against their consent.

The other positive connotation adjectives are used with another male character, Tariq. Tariq was the lover of Laila. However, due to unfavorable conditions and war in Afghanistan, the family of Tariq migrated towards Pakistan. Laila and Tariq had an intimate relationship, due to which Aziza was born. The character of Tariq is portrayed as soft, gentle and loving person. He is opposite to Rasheed. The massiveness of Tariq’s body is shown through the adjective thick. e.g.

*‘She watched him pedal away, saw his broad, thick shouldered figure disappear around the turn at the end.’*

Here the masculinity of Tariq is displayed by the adjectives like broad and thick. Laila used to tell her daughter about her father and admires him. ‘Oh, your father was handsome, Aziza. He was perfect. Perfect like you are’

#### 4.7 Adjectives used with Women having Negative Connotation

The following negative connotational adjectives display women as a disgraceful object.

Table 4 - Adjectives portraying women negatively

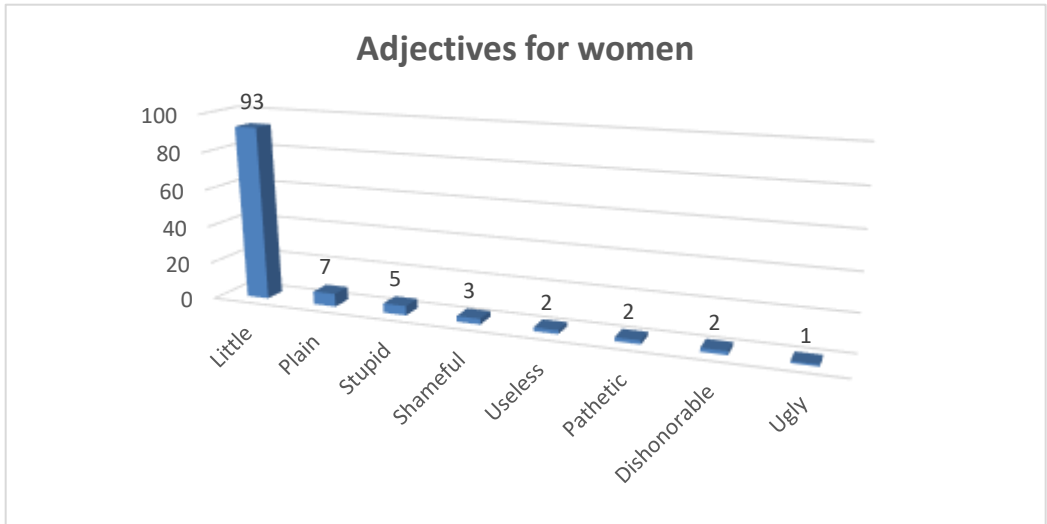
Adjective	Frequency
Little	93
Plain	7
Stupid	5
Shameful	3
Useless	2
Pathetic	2
Dishonorable	2
Ugly	1
Total	115

In patriarchal society women are called by derogatory terms. In the novel of Khaled Hosseini, A Thousand Splendid Suns, female characters have been called with such adjectives that have negative connotations. Females also used bad words for female as well. In the story the female characters are shown as a little object or a property of male characters. From the start of the novel, the female character Nana talked about her story to her daughter Mariam. As Nana was not beautiful girl, so the other girls made fun of her. Here we can deduce that it’s the woman who tries to degrade other woman by insulting her on her physical appearance and facial looks. The following line tells us the story of Mariam’s mother.

‘She went on to say how Mil’s wives had called her an ugly lowly stone carver’s daughter.’ Here the concept of lower and upper class also come. As the Mill’s wives belonged to upper class, so

they made fun of Nana who was from lower class. It was a Patriarchal Society where the man is superior and female is inferior but the females make fun of each other because they can't make fun of males. That's why they target the females who are lower than them.

Figure 4 - Adjectives for women with negative connotation



Nana used to call Mariam with negative connotation adjectives like little harami. She threw off her frustration on her daughter and made her feel bad. It is illustrated through the following line of novel.

*'Close and through gritted teeth said, "You a clumsy little harami'.*

Mariam was an illegitimate daughter of Nana and Jameel. So Jameel left Nana and Mariam on Kolbe (small cottage). Mariam is represented as unwanted thing who can't have love, home and acceptance in this patriarchal society. After marriage, Mariam again became an unwanted thing for Rasheed. He didn't pay much attention towards Mariam. He looked down upon her. After Laila the existence of Mariam for Rasheed also almost vanished. He used negative connotative words for Mariam. As it has been shown by the following line of the text,

*'Rasheed was looking at her. Mariam shook her head. Useless, he said, snatching the phone from her.'*

The character of Mariam is shown as a meek woman. She did not argue with Rasheed. Another female character in the novel is Laila. She is also shown as inferior at the start of her marriage with Rasheed. The negative connotation adjective stupid is used with Laila.

*'That time, Laila went home. She lay on her stomach, feeling like a stupid pitiable animal.'*

Negative connotation adjectives represent women as fragile, weak, passive, empty-headed and unintelligent.

#### 4.8 Verbs used with Male & Female Categories

The study's research question focuses on the author's verb selection for male and female categories which demonstrate that there are 258 verbs that has been used with males and females collectively.

Out of them, 40% verbs are employed with male gender to depict his violent, dominating, controlling, authoritative and autonomous status whereas 60% are used with female category, out

of which 54% verbs represent women as oppressed and inferior and 35% verbs show women as a submissive creature and 11% verbs depict the resilience of women.

#### 4.9 Verbs used with Male Characters

Following verbs are giving the proof of oppression of men over women.

Table 5 - Verbs depicting male's oppression

Verbs	Frequency
Pushed	35
Dragged	17
Locked	12
Grabbed	11
Yelled	10
Dug	10
Fought	9
Total	104

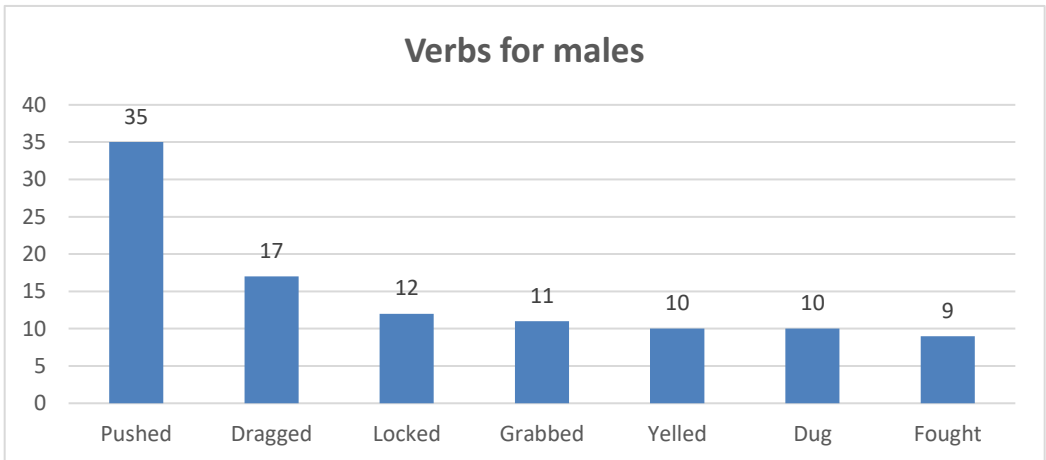
Men are presented as a tyrannical, governing class that control women violently and manipulate them into being their puppets. This concept is evident in the text:

'Rasheed shoved the children aside, pushed Laila to the ground, and began kicking her'

The pushing and kicking act of Rasheed demonstrate his brutal and cruel nature who believes in the use of force to overpower the woman.

'Then she was being dragged by his hair' is another example of how he oppressed and victimized his wife and exerts various form of violence on her.

Figure 5 - Verbs supporting male's cruel treatment with women.



Males rule over their homes and take control of all decisions while women are slaves and they treat them badly.

*'You two, upstairs. Rasheed grabbed Laila by the elbow and pushed her up.'*

Here, Rasheed is exercising his supremacy over his wives, thus performing his role as an authoritative individual. Males are seen in dominating and controlling nature like 'And when Aziza woke up crying and Rasheed yelled for Laila to come up and shut her up.'

Rasheed is performing the conventional gender role where he is a bread winner of the family and to take care of kids is the task of the female members of the family.

## 5 Verbs used with Female Category

Verbs are representing women as being resilient, inferior and oppressed, submissive object.

### 5.1 Verbs depicting the resilience of women

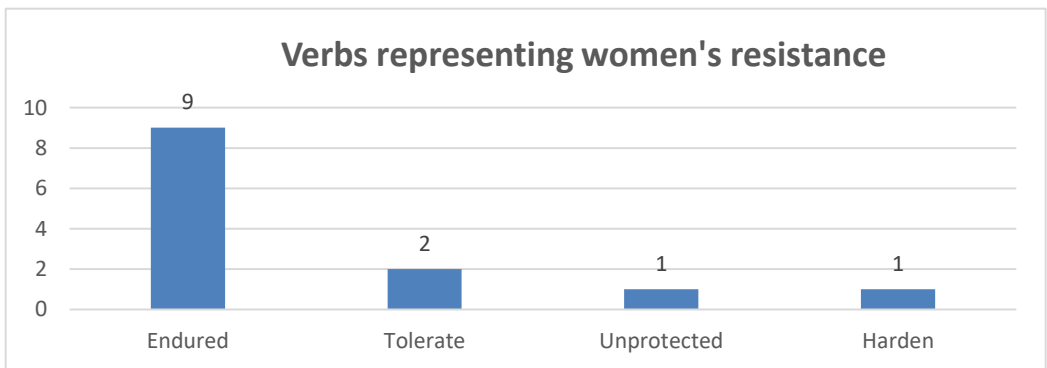
Verbs are denoting the women's enduring ability.

Table 6 - Verbs depicting women as strong and resilient

Verbs	Frequency
Endured	9
Tolerate	2
Unprotected	1
Harden	1
Total	17

As a feminist writer, Hosseini portrays the image of strong women. Still, overall, the stances of the robust and resilient females are very few in the entire text, 'Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid.

Figure 6 - Verbs manifesting women's strength



Another stance which is the manifestation of the same concept is 'over the years, Mariam had learned to harden herself against his scorn and reproach'. The writer wants to convey the struggle that women face patriarchal society and ultimately, she learns how to manage herself in such oppressive situation. Though the percentage of strong and solid women is not much but Hosseini through such verb is conveying his optimism and a ray of hope that in spite of drastic circumstances, women will emerge as a light from the dark clouds.

## 6 Verbs portraying women as Oppressed and Inferior.

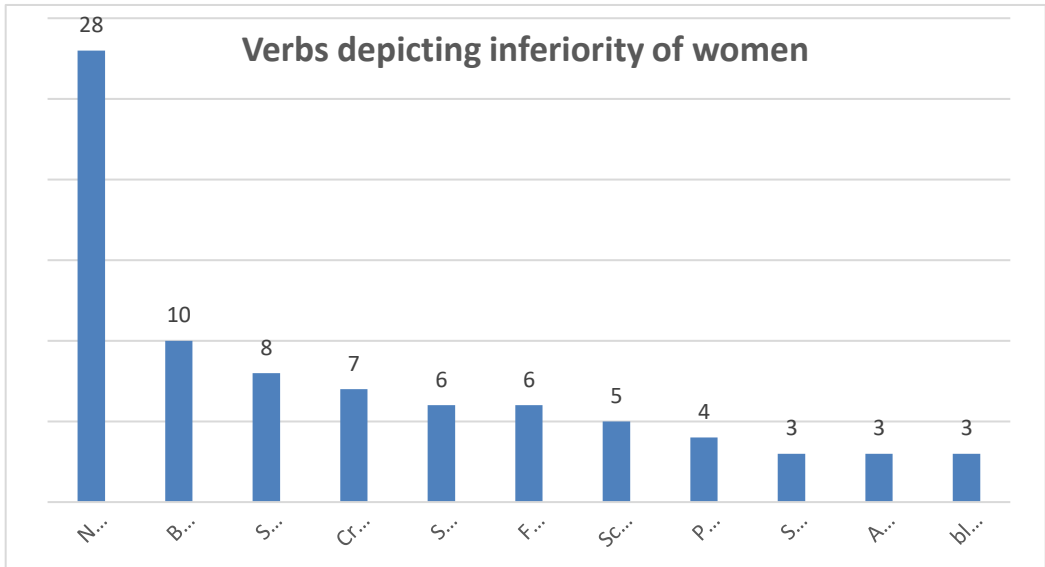
Verbs are manifesting women as minor and persecute.

Table 7 - Verbs showing women as tyrannized and worthless

Verbs	Frequency
Nodded	28
Beaten	10
Shaken	8
Crawled	7
Swollen	6

Faint	6
Screamed	5
Pained	4
Submitted	3
Ached	3
Bloodied	3
Total	83

Figure 7 - Verbs representing women as victim of violence



People all over the world have a frequently held belief that Afghanistan is a male-oriented nation where women have to tolerate great pain and demeaning conditions. Like in the text;

*'As Mariam pressed the handkerchief to her eye. Done? Mariam nodded Sure? Yes. He took her by elbow'*

Mariam immediately acts upon the command of Rasheed depicts her dependent and miserable condition where as a wife, she is bound to obey her husband. Women may occasionally deal with either verbal or physical assault in both professional and personal settings.

*'She thought guilty of Mariam, beaten and bloodied, locked in the toolshed.'*

This line shows that in male-centered society, women face unjust attitude and menial treatment in their own homes. Mariam was always treated as inferior not only in her father's house but also in her husband's home.

The writer is enacting females in the Afghani context by using this novel.

**7 Verbs representing women as a Submissive Object**

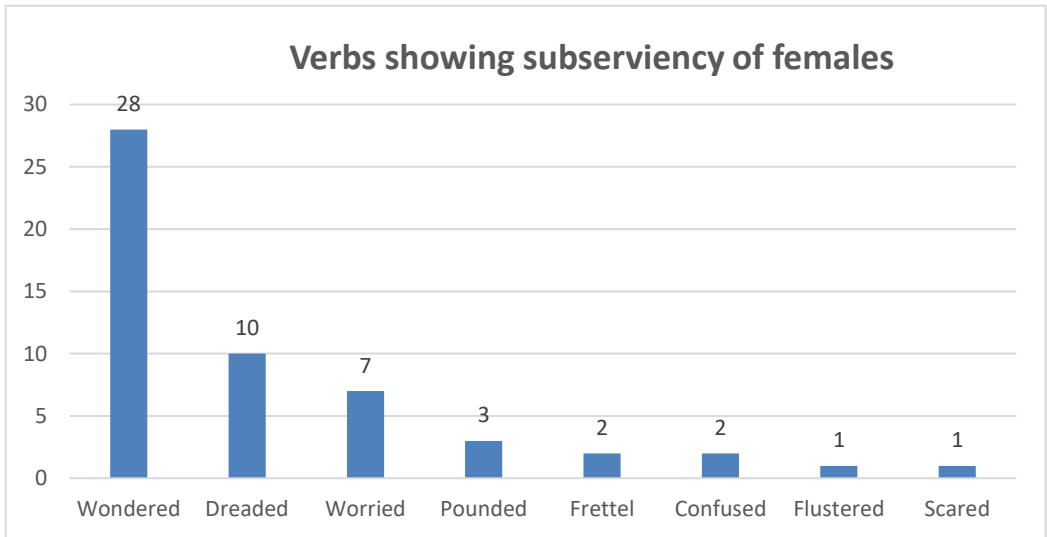
Verbs depict females as a terrifying thing.

Table 8 - Verbs demonstrating females as subordinate and submissive object

Wondered	28
Dreaded	10
Worried	7
Pounded	3
Fretted	2
Confused	2
Flustered	1
Scared	1
Total	54

The data reveals that not only women are victims of linguistic and physical violence; they are also considered as submissive objects by males.

Figure 8 - Verbs depicting women as an object



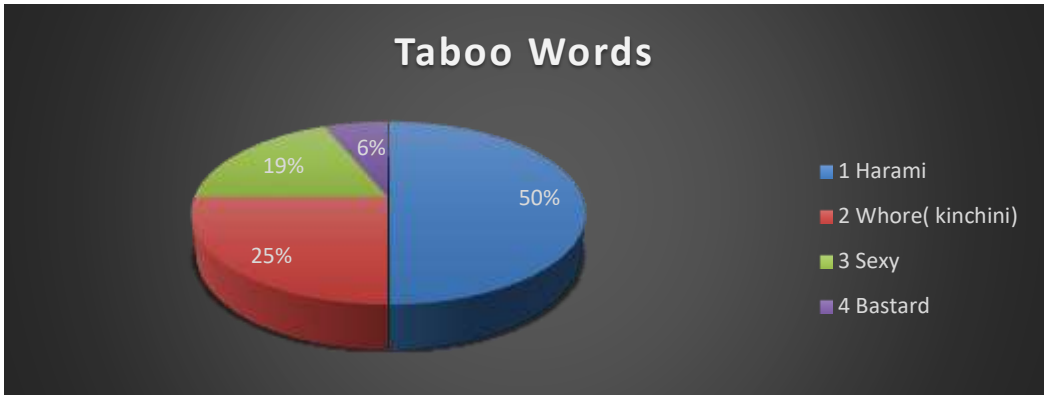
Women have no will of their own. They are treated as a plaything in the hand of male gender like ‘Mariam dreaded the sound of him coming home in the evening,’

This line depicts how Rasheed is ruling over Mariam that even the sounds of her footsteps afraid her. ‘Mariam wondered how so many women could suffer the same miserable condition’ showing the treatment of women as non-resistant and sub-ordinate agent of society. Males always behave with females as second-class citizens. In male-oriented society, women are taken as object.

**8 Use of Taboo Terms**

A verbal taboo is an expression that is viewed unsuitable, unpleasant and prohibited to use (Gao, 2008). The research question takes into consideration the novel’s use of taboo words for both males and females. The frequency indicates that the significant gender differentiation in a language is associated with taboos. Most of taboo words were used by male characters in various situations. E.g., whore, kinchini and sexy. Whereas a few forbidden terms were used by both gender like harami.

Figure 9 - Taboo terms with percentage frequency



Harami is most frequently spoken taboo word used not only by males to devalue the females but also by females to depreciate the other female. The second highly used forbidden term is Whore and in Afghani context, it is Kinchini which is used only by males for demeaning and disapproving females. Bastard is used as a neutral taboo term, sometimes occur as a counterpart of most frequent forbidden term, harami.

Table 9 - Taboo terms with frequency

Sr. No	Taboo Terms	Frequency
1	Harami	16
2	Whore (kinchini)	8
3	Sexy	6
4	Bastard	2

Frequency reveals that most of the taboo words are employed by male characters especially Rasheed (in this novel) to dehumanize his wives in various settings. When Rasheed comes to know that Laila (who is his second wife) is in contact with her lover Tariq, he loses his temper, and in fit of fury, he addresses his wife: 'And you are a whore. A whore and adzed. A thieving whore that's what you are! Moreover, another statement of Rasheed reinforcing his behavior of degrading his wife is manifested in the following sentence. 'An heir- loom breaking clumsy little harami.'

Not only male characters have used taboo terms for females but also females have employed such derogatory terms for other females. Like in the beginning of this novel, when Mariam insists her mother (Nana) to take her to her father's home, Nana bursts out on her, 'You are a clumsy little harami. This is my reward for everything I have endured.' Following examples demonstrate how taboo language used to abuse women and how a woman is doubly marginalized, thus female is facing humiliation from both males and females.

1. 'It was an ugly, loathsome thing to be harami, like an insect, like the scurrying cockroaches Nana was always cursing'.
2. 'About you harami. You take me fool, you whore?'

## 9 Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to explore gender representation in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by utilizing a corpus-based approach. With the help of software AntConc (4.2.0), the study seeks to analyze linguistic features such as adjectives, verbs and taboo words used with male and female categories in the selected text. Using corpus-based stylistic studies, it has been concluded that the representation of male and female characters in this novel supports Dale Spender's theory of

female subservience by male superiors through their language. Moreover, the present research is in the favor of the study that has been carried out by Zyniger (2001). Zyniger's study advocates the current research by demonstrating superiority of male characters and inferiority of female characters. Azher's (2014) research also reinforces the present study that the gender representation is based on culture to which characters belong to. Female characters in this book are more likely to witness male characters' control and verbal hostility. Cultural factors can be one of the causes for depreciation of women. The majority of forbidden terms (some are specific to Afghani context) (Table 9) and demeaning words are used against women to depict their lower position in society. In Afghani society, which is a patriarchal society, women are typically viewed as belonging to lower social strata than men. They are portrayed as worthless and offer the same treatment (Table 7). Due to this this, woman is taken as meager object rather than human beings in their outlook on life (Table 8). 54% of verbs are evidence of women's subjugation. But as a feminist writer, Hosseini has tried to show the picture of resilient woman in male-dominated society, though, overall such instances are infinitesimal and have low frequency (Table6) like Endured, Tolerate, Harden, and Unprotected. On the basis of data analysis, adjectives used with men (58%) are more than women (42%). This claims that men receive more description than women who are allegedly underrepresented. Men are depicted as physically strong, powerful, rigid, and perfect. (Table 3). Whereas some negative qualities are associated with woman's nature like Stupid, Little, Dishonorable, Useless (Table 4) revealing the humiliation and degradation of women. Overall, man is represented as autonomous, robust, and independent figure while woman has given no such traits. Though a typical gender representation is shown, but by using such verbs (11%), where woman is seen as strong, Hosseini is painting a ray of hope for Afghani women.

The research is significant because it has extracted a large number of adjectives and verbs using corpus tool for manifestation of genders from such a book that is representation of Afghani society and it will help the students and teachers of literature to study literature from unique view point of gender roles and uses corpus-based methodology to assist them to obtain the better understanding of Afghani culture and tradition. Moreover, the present study has aimed to investigate the connection between language, literature, and corpus approach. The current study sheds light on Afghani woman as presented in this novel which often indicates the position of women in Afghani society. Such portrayal is very thought-provoking and will provide new paths for future researchers to examine more literature relating to Afghani society in corpus linguistics.

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