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Manipulative Language and Power in Intimate Relationships: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Victim Testimony Narratives in 'Luka dan Saksi' (Chapter 21) of Broken Strings by Aurélie Moeremans

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ABSTRACT

The research on intimate partner violence reveals that abuse is not merely physical but also constructed in language. Although this phenomenon has been examined in various studies, these have predominantly focused on institutional discourse. Moreover, no systematic study has yet been conducted on the manipulative use of language in literary victim testimony. The study examines the language of manipulation and control in perpetrator discourse as reconstructed in the victim's narrative on Chapter 21 ("Luka dan Saksi") Broken Strings (2023) by Aurélie Moeremans to find out how this language establishes power asymmetry. This particular research employs a qualitative approach by combining critical discourse analysis and forensic linguistics to achieve both micro linguistic features and macro social meanings of the data. The analysis of the data, made up of 23 perpetrator utterances, is thematic and interpretive. According to the findings the six manipulative strategies we constantly encounter as identified in the articles are threats and coercion, control of interrogative, threatening suicide, gaslighting, blaming the victim discourse and emotional manipulation. These patterns demonstrate an observable transition from subtle threats to more overt threats of violence. The findings demonstrate that linguistic characteristics act to build manipulation and maintain unequal power relations within intimate relationships. The working paper concludes that manipulative language functions as a discursive violence that consolidates coercive control. This study contributes to forensic linguistics by spotlighting literary testimony as a valuable source of data as well as offering an integrative approach to analysing manipulative discourse in non institutional contexts.

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1. Introduction

Language performs various functions, it is not a mere instrument of communication, but also a strategic instrument of a power, control, and social domination (Norman Fairclough, 1995; Teun A. van Dijk, 2008; Pierre Bourdieu, 1991). The field of forensic linguistics has increasingly been used to deal with intimate partner violence (IPV). For instance, the analysis of language could expose levels of abuse, coercive control, and power relations which may not always be obvious (or not noticed) and which cannot be always adequately captured by evidence such as photographs of injuries and other physical evidence (Coates & Wade, 2007; Trinch, 2003; Evan Stark, 2007). In abusive relationships, perpetrators use manipulative language that employs subtle semantic strategies, pragmatic implications, and discursive patterns that construct reality in ways that benefit them and disable their victims. Researchers in the field of language and gender have similarly shown that these discursive patterns are rooted in a larger sociocultural order that normalize male dominance and female silence (Wodak, 1997; Michelle Lazar, 2005; Talbot, 2010).

The memoir Broken Strings (2023) by Aurélie Moeremans offers a useful primary source to examine manipulative discourse in intimate relationships. Narrative testimony has already been recognized as a rich site for studying lived experience and identity construction (Catherine Kohler Riessman, 2008; David Herman, 2009; Shoshana Felman & Dori Laub, 1992). Chapter 21, entitled ‘Luka dan Saksi’ (pp. 177–189), features a particularly rich testimony narrative, in which the author reconstructs verbal exchanges that exemplify various linguistic form of manipulating and controlling. There are 23 direct utterances from the perpetrator that can be systematically analyzed.

Forensic linguistics has been used most on institutional discourse including courtroom discourse and police interrogation (Ehrlich, 2001; Matoesian, 2001; Malcolm Coulthard, Alison Johnson and David Wright, 2017; Roger Shuy, 2008). Threat acts and coercive speech studies have proved that linguistic coercion works on a continuum from implicit coercion to overt threat (Gales, 2010). While they show how language works in legal and investigative settings, most studies do not address how text is discursively constructed and represented through personal narratives, particularly memoirs about life experiences of abuse.

Nonetheless, previous studies (Langan et al., 2016; Jennifer Andrus, 2024) have not systematically explored how manipulative linguistic strategies are reconstructed within the victim testimony narratives of literary texts and how these representations might contribute to our understanding of power asymmetry and victim credibility further than the court of law. Moreover, findings indicate analysis of IPV discourse mainly relies on institutional or macro datasets; however, there has been little consideration of narrative-based testimony (Neubauer et al., 2023). The failure to integrate forensic linguistics, discourse analysis, and verification of literary testimony as a valid source of evidentiary linguistic data creates this gap.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by analyzing manipulative language within a memoir-based testimony narrative, positioning literary texts as a significant yet

underutilized domain for forensic linguistic inquiry. By doing so, the study contributes to expanding the scope of forensic linguistics beyond institutional settings and highlights the relevance of narrative discourse in understanding linguistic manifestations of abuse.

The research aim of this study is to examine the linguistic strategies of manipulation and control evident in the perpetrator's discourse as reconstructed in the victim's testimony in Chapter 21, to analyze how these linguistic patterns construct and sustain power asymmetry within intimate relationships, and to explore the implications of these findings for understanding victim credibility and testimony within legal contexts.

2. Literature Review

Research on intimate partner violence (IPV) from a linguistic perspective consistently demonstrates that violence within intimate relationships is not merely a physical phenomenon, but also a discursive construct shaped through language use. Studies have shown that linguistic structures, narrative strategies, and broader sociocultural discourses interact in constructing, maintaining, and legitimizing power asymmetries between perpetrators and victims.

Researchers Kilgore et al. (2015) argue that grammatical structure produces agency and control at the micro-linguistic level. Through a quantitative linguistic analysis, the authors found that perpetrators often place themselves in the subject position while others are relegated to the object position, thus enacting an objectifying position and asymmetrical power relations. This finding shows that manipulation is structurally embedded in language as well as in meaning and intention.

Kilgore et al. (2015) find relevant grammatical structures contain meaning, which are responsible for constructing agency and controlling practices at the micro-linguistic level. As per their analysis, offenders are generally likely to put themselves in subject position and the other as object, which strengthens an objectifying stance and unequal power relations. Meaning and intention are not the only aspect of manipulation, as this finding shows, but structurally, manipulation is encoded in language.

According to Langan et al. (2014), victim narratives are not neutral representations of experience at the discourse level; they are constructed through ideologies. Through a discursive psychology approach, they show that victims express multiple and often conflicting identities, such as victim, agent and partial perpetrator, in narratives. Various ideologies such as neoliberalism exist that show how identities are constructed, for example, being responsible at a personal level, but accepting level institutional action (Langan et al., 2014). In his work, Andrus contextualizes IPV narratives as intertextual which links micro - and macro-level discourses. The work of Andrus (2025) illustrates that victim storytellings are formed in part by individual linguistic choices, but also by circulating social norms, legal discourses and cultural ideologies. The meanings of violence are constructed through the interaction of micro-level socio-narrative structures and macro-level discourses and expectations in society, as shown by Andrus (2024). According to Andrus (2025), IPV narratives reproduce and simultaneously depart from

dominant social norms, positioning storytelling as a site where ideology can be negotiated.

The language of threats is further evidence from a forensic linguistic perspective that language also works as a means of coercion and control. According to Heita (2024), the use of threat text messages in the context of gender-based violence shows certain similarities in how language is used to intimidate, manipulate, and psychologically pressure. As such, language should be seen as active evidence. It offers insight into the intent and behavior of the perpetrator. It further strengthens the idea that IPV language is not descriptive but performative, furthering violence in a very active manner.

By contrast with these qualitative and discourse-based approaches, Neubauer et al. (2023) provide a systematic review showing that IPV studies increasingly use computational text analysis methods. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the studies rely on large data sets such as social media or police report or data from institutional records. Whereas only a few studies rely on narrative-type data from victims. This indicates that the field appears to be methodologically 'imbalanced' in that it underuses rich qualitative narrative forms of data.

Although not always agreeing, the studies show consistent results that language is implicated in the creation and maintenance of power differences in intimate relationships. On the other hand, they show a huge drawback. Though interviews, institutional speech, and digital communication have all been previously considered, the literary or memoir-based victim testimony has received little consideration as a source of forensic linguistic analysis. The gap calls for an integrative approach in issues of this nature that combine the micro-linguistics of words with narrative discourse, forensic perspectives and alternative data such as testimonial literature.

3. Research Method

The present study is qualitative in nature, employing critical discourse analysis (CDA) and forensic linguistic analysis as its research method, and is designed to examine power and manipulative languages in IPV. The research relies on Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional mode; however, it centres on the micro dimension (which records analysis) and on the macro dimension (which social practice). The analytical stage of the meso level is not considered on its own, and is instead undertaken implicitly via the interpretation of narrative context and the construction of discourse.

At the micro level, the analysis focuses on the linguistic features like lexical choices, syntactic structures and pragmatic meanings. At the macro-level, this study elucidates the ways in which these linguistic resources construct and sustain meanings in social life.

The primary data source is Chapter 21 ('Luka dan Saksi') of Broken Strings (2023) by Aurélie Moeremans (pp. 177–189), selected through purposive sampling, due to its tight packing of reconstructed dialogue, and explicit depiction of manipulative dialogues. The unit of analysis identified 23 concrete perpetrator utterances as reconstructed direct speech attributed to the perpetrator in the narrative.

The data analysis was conducted thematically and interpretively with the application of forensic linguistic sensitivity and discourse analysis. The process of analysis consisted of (1) the selection of relevant utterances made by the perpetrator, (2) an examination of the relevant micro-linguistic features of the utterances, and (3) an interpretation of the macro-function of the utterances in constructing manipulation, control and power relations. Through careful readings of the text and analysis of its manipulative language, it was found that threats and coercive language were utilized often. The use of interrogative control, the gaslighting of the victim, and victim-blaming discourse were also common. Further, the use of emotional manipulation and escalating language observed.

Instead of using categorical coding to report the findings, the results are presented in analytical narrative paragraphs, where each pattern is discussed through detailed textual evidence and contextual interpretation. Such an approach facilitates an in-depth investigation of how the linguistic features work dynamically in the narrative to build the coercive control and discursive violence.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employs a theoretically informed interpretative framework in which the application of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and forensic linguistics provides a consistent link between linguistic analysis and sociocultural interpretation. Evidence is text based, and the claim in each one is supported either by the data or quote.

4. Result and Discussion

Analysis of Chapter 21 reveals systematic patterns of manipulative language across six primary categories identified from 23 perpetrator utterances. This section presents the empirical findings with detailed linguistic analysis grounded in actual textual data, while simultaneously discussing the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. The findings demonstrate an escalation hierarchy in manipulative tactics, ranging from implicit intimidation to explicit death threats, which aligns with Stark's (2007) concept of coercive control yet reflects the specific linguistic and cultural context of Indonesia.

3.1 Direct Threats and Coercion Through Third-Party Objects

One of the most prominent patterns of manipulation in Chapter 21 is the use of threats directed at a third-party object (a pet named Angel) as a mechanism of control. The perpetrator employs this strategy to compel the victim's compliance without directly threatening the victim herself, a tactic that creates psychological distance from responsibility while maximizing coercive effect.

"Tell me where the letter is, or…" he said coldly. (p. 177)

This utterance employs an incomplete conditional structure ('or…') that pragmatically functions as an implicit threat. The ellipsis following 'or' creates a space for the victim's imagination to supply the horrifying consequence, which is often more

terrifying than an explicit threat. The narrative clarifies the context: 'He took Angel from my arms and held her head tightly, as though it were something he could crush at any moment.' The combination of physical action (gripping the animal's head tightly) and verbal utterance constructs a highly effective multimodal threat.

The strategy is repeated in a second situation with greater explicitness. The victim's response, 'Go ahead' (p. 178), marks a critical moment in which the threat loses its effectiveness. The victim has reached a point at which she can no longer be controlled through threats directed at her pet. This represents a shift in the power dynamic to which the perpetrator responds by escalating to physical violence: 'He squeezed my arm so hard that my skin felt stretched, and then blood appeared' (p. 179).

The use of third-party objects as instruments of threat is a documented tactic in the literature on coercive control (Stark, 2007). This strategy enables the perpetrator to maintain a morally ambiguous position ('I am not threatening you; I am merely concerned about what might happen to Angel') while achieving the same coercive effect as a direct threat. This pattern also demonstrates one of the key characteristics of coercive control: the perpetrator's capacity to exploit the victim's emotional attachments, in this case, the bond with her pet, as leverage for control.

3.2 Rapid-Fire Interrogation and Control Through Questioning

The perpetrator employs a series of rapid-fire questions not intended to elicit information, but to create a defensive posture and intimidate the victim:

"Why did you hide that letter? What for? What are you going to do with it?" (p. 178)

These three questions are posed in rapid succession without allowing any opportunity for response. Linguistically, they function not as genuine interrogatives seeking information but as accusations framed in question form. The structures 'What for?' and 'What are you going to do with it?' presuppose malicious intent on the part of the victim, placing the burden of proof upon her to demonstrate her innocence. The narrative notes: 'I did not answer'—a rational response when the questions are designed to be unanswerable in any satisfying manner.

The repeated interrogation pattern recurs in another context: 'Where is the letter?' his voice sharp (p. 177). The 'sharpness' of the voice indicates a threatening modality. This simple question, within the established context of constant surveillance and threats, functions as a demand with implicit consequences for non-compliance. The fact that the perpetrator 'immediately' knew of the letter's disappearance—prompting the narrator to ask, 'How could he have known so quickly?'—indicates a level of obsessive surveillance and control over the environment. This pattern reflects what Stark (2007) identifies as 'microregulation'—the detailed control of small aspects of the victim's daily life that creates a sense of being constantly watched. This linguistic microregulation functions to restrict the victim's autonomy even within personal spaces such as the home.

3.3 Suicidal Threats as Coercive Control

The most extreme pattern of manipulation in this chapter is the threat of mutual suicide as a response to the possibility of separation. This represents an escalation from implicit to explicit threats against life:

"I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN BE SEPARATED FROM YOU! WE ARE HUSBAND AND WIFE UNTIL DEATH DO US PART! DO YOU DOUBT THE CHURCH'S LETTER? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE! WE SHOULD BOTH DIE NOW! I LOVE YOU!" (p. 181)

This speech act demonstrates a number of simultaneous manipulative strategies. First, the capitalization in the transcription indicates a 'high voice' (shouting), which counts as a form of verbal threat. Moreover, the suicidal threat, 'WE SHOULD BOTH DIE NOW!' is coupled with dangerous physical action: His hands yanked the steering wheel left and right, the car swerving madly. This is an actualization of a threat, a doing, not a saying.

The phrase I LOVE YOU was uttered at the end of a series of threats to commit suicide which reveals an unsettling mix of love and violence. This is what IPV scholars call 'trauma bonding' (Dutton & Painter, 1981), where violence is met with affection creating emotional dependency on the part of the victim. The threat of suicide to justify the right to a marital relationship 'UNTIL DEATH DO US PART', based on the religious marital bond indicates the usage of religious discourse by the perpetrator to characterize abuse. The words "until death do us part" are used literally and as a threat rather than a promise.

The victim's reply was "I know we are married!" I'm sure of it! i won't go anywhere! The effectiveness of this coercion is demonstrated. The victim claims that he/she would say whatever the perpetrator wanted to hear ('I shouted whatever he wanted to hear, just to make him stop') as a survival response. This shows that 'agreement' or 'reconciliation' in relation to threats of violence or suicide cannot constitute consent, but rather a compliance under pressure. The internal thought narrative of the victim ('the only thing in my head was: don't die') sharply contrasts with her external utterances, revealing a dissociation between public compliance and private resistance.

These findings are important in assessing victim credibility in a legal context. Statements by victims that seem to "agree" or "reconcile" with the perpetrator for example, "I know we are married! I have no doubts! Are often used by defence counsel i.e. to impeach later evidence Nonetheless, from forensic linguistic analysis it is revealed that these are not genuine expressions of will or consent but rather survival responses occurring under imminent threat of death. According to Trinch (2003), the irregularities found in IPV victim testimony often indicate a genuine trauma rather than a fabrication by the victims. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) emphasize that forensic linguists must consider the pragmatic circumstances behind utterances, given that forced utterances cannot be assessed by the same standards as non-forced utterances.

3.4 Gaslighting and the Construction of Alternative Reality

The perpetrator consistently employs gaslighting strategies to deny or reconstruct reality when confronted with evidence of violence:

"Oh, that's from the shoot. There have been a lot of fighting scenes." (p. 185)

The victim had a bruise on the left arm and was asked by the perpetrator's mother, who noticed it, what had happened. Consequently, the perpetrator quickly said that it was because of the shoot. The fast response time ('quickly, as if reflexive') suggests that this was part of a well-prepared strategy. The euphemism "fighting scenes" used to explain away the bruises that domestic violence causes constitutes semantic minimization. The victim is forced to endorse this false message: 'Yes, fighting scenes' (p. 185).

The story provides a context of the coercion, 'I could not say anything with him so close. "I let out a little laugh". The victim must join in the gaslighting done to her because the perpetrator's body is intimidating. Gaslighting isn't just a tactic of the perpetrator. It's a whole system that forces the victim to become an accomplice in denying her own reality.

The forced participation in the gaslighting process causes what Sweet (2019) refers to as "epistemic exploitation", which refers to the victimization of the agent's capacity to know. When the victim is forced to denounce the violence she suffered, it will shield the abuser from social responsibility and undermine the victim's own reality in a way that she cannot believe herself. Each time the victim is made to 'force a laugh' or affirms the untruth, further psychological harm occurs through the dissonance between what is true for her and what she is required to perform. This kind of discursive violence functions as an ideological mechanism (van Dijk, 2008) through which the ruling party re-produces and naturalizes the unequal distribution of power.

3.5 Victim-Blaming and Control Through Religious Discourse

The perpetrator employs religious language to shift blame onto the victim and position himself as the aggrieved party:

"If you truly cannot love your husband in the name of Christ, then fine, I'll take you there." (p. 181)

This utterance employs the phrase 'in the name of Christ' to frame the victim's non-compliance as a religious failure rather than a rational response to violence. The conditional structure ('If you truly cannot') presupposes that loving one's husband is a religious obligation that the victim has failed to fulfill. This inverts reality: the perpetrator, who commits violence, positions himself as the victim of the victim's failure to love.

Another victim-blaming pattern emerges in the context of social control: 'If you want to go back to the apartment, don't embarrass me in front of my friends by running away like that' (p. 181). The perpetrator frames the victim's attempt to seek help ('running away') as an act that 'embarrasses' him. This redirects focus from the violence

the victim has experienced to the perpetrator's social reputation. The use of the word 'running away' also constructs the victim as a misbehaving child rather than an adult making a rational decision for her own safety.

"Who do you think you are? You can't even be a proper wife. You can't give me a child." (p. 187)

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3.6 Intimidation and Implicit Threats

In addition to explicit threats, the perpetrator employs various forms of implicit intimidation to maintain control:

"Don't start acting brave with me. Don't think that just because you have new friends, you can behave disrespectfully." (p. 184)

This utterance employs negative imperatives ('Don't start… Don't think…') to control the victim's future behavior. The phrases 'acting brave' and 'disrespectfully' are demeaning labels that construct the victim's assertive behavior as insubordination. The physical context adds a coercive dimension: 'his voice was soft, but his fingers pressed hard into my skin' and 'whispering in my ear so that the housemaid ironing in the adjacent room would not hear.' The combination of physical violence (pressing the skin) and verbal violence (threats) carried out in deliberate silence reveals the perpetrator's awareness that his behavior is socially unacceptable.

The warning ‘Be careful. Don’t start getting too big for your boots’ (p. 184) constitutes an implicit threat that specifies no particular consequence but implies one. The accusation of being ‘big for your boots’ frames the victim’s growing confidence as arrogance in need of correction. Similarly, the sequence of accusatory questions—‘You did it on purpose, didn’t you? You wanted him to see. Do you think I’m scared now?’ (p. 186)—accuses the victim of a manipulative strategy (‘You did it on purpose’) when in fact she had simply not concealed evidence of violence. The question ‘Do you think I’m scared now?’ is a preemptive denial—the perpetrator denies fear before being accused of it, which paradoxically reveals that he does indeed fear losing control.

“You’ll regret this. I can make things much worse for you. You think you’re strong now? Just wait.” (pp. 186–187)

This constitutes an explicit threat of escalating violence (‘I can make things much worse for you’). The structure ‘Just wait’ creates sustained anticipation of danger, designed to produce constant fear even when actual violence is not occurring at that moment.

3.7 Emotional Manipulation and Code-Switching

The perpetrator demonstrates the capacity to shift rapidly between threats and affection, a pattern that generates emotional confusion and trauma bonding:

“Darling, stop it, don’t be dramatic. Come on, let’s talk this through properly.” (p. 187)

After issuing threats and insults, the perpetrator suddenly switches to a gentle tone, using the term of affection ‘Darling’ . The narrative states that ‘as usual, he tried to soften… gentle and sweet but false.’ Referring to the victim’s emotional response to threats as ‘dramatic’ is a form of minimisation and victim-blaming. Through the phrase ‘talk this through properly’, the accused is constructed as a rational party seeking to avoid unnecessary confrontation, and any attempt to suggest otherwise overlooks the fact that he’s threatened the victim with violence.

The exclamation ‘Thank you God, my wife, Aurélie, I love you! ‘The suicide threat incident that was also made recently in the vehicle came immediately after’ (p. 182). The offender oscillates between violent acts and loving gestures, discussing God with gratitude (“Thank you, God”). Through the utilization of the victim’s full name (‘Aurélie’) and relational label (‘my wife’), this person reaffirms a claim of possession shortly after the victim is rendered compliant through death threats.

This cycle of shifting from violent behaviour to affectionate behaviour to violent behaviour (and so on) is a feature of the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979). The quick pace of these changes leaves the victim uncertain and unable to formulate an adequate response, thus keeping her in a heightened state of alertness and emotional disorientation. Essentially, code-switching isn’t spontaneous emotional expression but a tactical

manipulation technique. The abuser is able to control how he expresses emotions incredibly well. He can be very gentle when he wants to elicit compliance ('Darling, stop it, don't be dramatic'). He can be harsh when intimidating, ('You'll regret this'). And he can be very passionate when creating trauma bonding, ('Thank you, God, I love you'). The ability to switch quickly between emotional modalities indicates that this is not a 'loss of control' but rather a hyper-controlled performance for optimal manipulation.

3.8 Escalation Hierarchy and Systemic Patterns

An analysis of the above six categories shows the escalation hierarchy of the manipulative tactics of the perpetrator from the most implicit to the most explicit. This escalation can be mapped in the following way. Level 1: Indirect verbal intimidation ("Better be careful", "don't be getting too big for your boots"), level 2: Threats directed at a third-party object (the pet), level 3: Rabid-fire questioning and accusation, level 4: Verbalised threat of physical violence ("I could make your life hell"), level 5: Actual physical violence (squeeze the arm till it bleeds), and level 6: Suicidal/homicidal threats (collision with a car).

Significantly, this escalation occurs nearly in a matter of days (within the story of Chapter 21) and as a direct result of the victim's greater resistance. When the lower levels are ineffective, for example when the victim says 'Go ahead' in response to threat against her pet, the perpetrator immediately escalates. This illustrates the adaptive nature of coercive control, where the perpetrator modifies his behaviour to regain control.

The escalation pattern also revealed a contradiction in IPV – when victims start to resist, the violence is likely to escalate as well. The research revealed that intimate partner homicide is most likely to happen when the victim wants to leave or gain independance (i.e. social contact) (Campbell et al., 2003). Chapter 21's linguistic insights document this very thing every attempt by the victim towards autonomy (hiding the letter, not concealing bruises, threatening to call his mother) becomes responded to by escalation of linguistic and otherwise physical violence.

Across all six categories, the lexical mechanisms enable the consistent construction of power asymmetry through: (1) denial of the victim's reality and epistemic authority (gaslighting); (2) minimisation of perpetrator's violence and maximisation victim's 'faults' (victim-blaming); (3) attribution of responsibility of violence on victim's behaviour (causal reversal); (4) questions as accusations and to control (interrogative control); (5) implicit and explicit threats which rise in proportion to resistance (escalation hierarchy); and (6) emotional manipulation through code-switching between threats and affection (trauma bonding). At the heart of all these strategies lies the overall aim of creating a discursive space in which the victim's autonomy is limited, her perception is discounted, and her resistance is rendered futile or dangerous. Language doesn't just reflect or describe violence, it also produces violence. All utterances that are manipulative are acts of violence which are injurious, controlling, and dominative when not physically so.

3.9 Testimony as a Process of Narrative Reclamation

Chapter 21 recounts not only the violence that was inflicted, but also how the victim wrests back the narrative from the perpetrator. The most impact moment is when the victim stops agreeing to the gaslighting. The time comes when she takes the decision to stop hiding her bruises: ‘That day I had decided one thing: I would no longer try to hide everything. Let the People See Allow them to inquire (p. 185).

This shows how it involves a massive change from compliance to dissent and from silence to revelation. The victim communicates with the perpetrator using his own language, once again using threats. He mentions that he will call and tell the perpetrator’s mother to get him to leave the filming location. This threat is effective because it takes advantage of the fear of public exposure and loss of face that the perpetrator has used against the victim. The story notes: ‘I saw something in his eyes that I had never seen before: fear’ (p. 187).

The very act of writing the memoir represents the highest form of narrative. Through the reconstruction and analysis of the lying speeches of the perpetrator, the author does not merely document the violence but also denaturalizes it. Literary testimony thus functions as a kind of discursive resistance to coercive control. The victim regains control over the story the perpetrator sought to distort, deny and control. As such, Broken Strings is not only an individual testimony, but rather a political act that works against the silence and shame surrounding intimate partner violence.

4. Conclusion

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the writing of this scientific article.

Authors' contribution

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript

Statement of AI Usage

The authors would like to state that the only purpose of using generative AI techniques was to enhance the manuscript's general clarity, readability, and grammar. The writers thoroughly examined and confirmed every output produced with AI's help. The study's research data is wholly unique and hasn't been altered or produced by artificial intelligence.

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