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## Sketching Women: A Corpus-Based Study of Female Protagonist in *A Doll's House*

### Abstract:

*The This paper investigates the words used by Henrik Ibsen in his play, A Doll's House, to portray a female character. The use of adjectives for the female protagonist 'Nora' is of primary concern in this research. The play A Doll's House was downloaded from the internet and used for the corpus compilation, which was analyzed using the corpus tools, AntConc 3.5.8 and TagAnt, and explained with the help of the Feministic theoretical framework. The findings of the study suggest that the female protagonist is a submissive woman of low self-esteem due to the treatment she receives from her husband. This suggests that women were not treated reasonably by men in Norwegian society and are mostly victims of gender inequality because of the patriarchal nature of society. The present study sought to explore male domination and supremacy by focusing on the adjectives used for Nora, the female protagonist.*

### Key Words:

Norwegian Society, A Doll's House, Male Domination, Gender Discrimination

### Introduction

The current study is a corpus-based analysis of the adjectives used for the female protagonist, Nora, in the play *A Doll's House* written by Henrik Ibsen. It was published on 4 December 1879 and performed for the very first time in December 1879. The play was very controversial, and the controversy centred on Nora's decision to leave her children without any intention of returning, but she soon realized that her children needed more of their mother than her freedom. According to Ibsen, it was more appropriate for women to be wives and mothers. Ibsen was not a proponent of women's rights, but he was dealing with the issue of women's rights as an aspect of realism in this play. He did not intend to resolve the issue, but only shed light on the issue of women's rights. Ibsen depicted Nora, illustrating women's issues realistically. Through the portrayal of Nora, Ibsen sought to portray the real world, specifically the status of a woman in his society. In this play, Nora was treated as a child by other characters the play, especially her husband. The play is considered to be representative of Norwegian society. It presents the predicament of women by presenting the case of Nora, the main female character in the play, *A Doll's House*.

The current study explores the use of words in the description of Nora, the central character of the play, *A Doll's House*. Language in any discourse plays a paramount role in depicting cultural, social, religious, and economic divides. The gender divide presented in the play by Henrik Ibsen is considered to be one of the primary issues concerning his time.

He, with the appropriate use of language, has presented the case of Nora, a Norwegian woman who suffers because of the male-dominated society. This study was carried out by examining the character of Nora, the leading protagonists in the play, to see how women were treated in Norwegian society when this play was written. This study involves the concept of corpus analysis in which the corpus of the play *A Doll's House* was analyzed focusing on adjectives used by Henrik Ibsen to represent women. Adjectives are considered to play a central role in the description of characters in any piece of writing. Adjectives used to describe nouns and

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pronouns are referred to as descriptive adjectives. These descriptive adjectives are the focus of this research. This research helps to explore gender discrimination in the play with the help of adjectives used for female characters. This is one of the studies that use a corpus approach to shed light on the frequency and implications of the descriptive adjectives used in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, in order to examine the representation of women.

## Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of this research:

1. To explore the frequency of adjectives used for the description of Nora.
2. To examine the role of adjectives in the description of Nora

## Research Questions

1. What are the most used adjectives for Nora in the play, *A Doll's House*?
2. How does the use of adjective paint the predicaments of Norwegian women in general and Nora in particular?

## Delimitation

Keeping in mind the time and space constraints, the work deals only with the portrayal of women in a single Norwegian play, *A Doll's House*. Also, it presents the case of one leading female character, Nora. Moreover, the study is focused on one lexical element, adjectives.

## Literature Review

Language is a chief component of any debate, narrative, or discourse. The impact of what we say can be modified by how we say it. In other words, the appropriate use of words can generate a desired effect on the audience or the reader. The role of lexical items, especially nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, cannot be overemphasized in the portrayal of any character or situation in a literary piece of writing. Adjectives describe the essential properties of character or situation and therefore considered important in the depiction of characters, practices, and social norms. Digital humanities that combine the discipline of humanities with digital technologies have emerged as a very useful discipline that uses computer applications for the study of work of humanities such as literature, history, arts, etc. These days, Corpus tools are widely used in the analysis of different types of literature. A study on Bapsi Sidhwa ([Mahmood, Mahmmod, & Nawaz, 2014](#)) reported that Sidhwa often used adjectives in her plays. Similarly, in another corpus-based study, the frequent use of adjectives in *Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows* was investigated ([Salim & Saad, 2016](#)). The study was conducted to explore the frequency of frequently occurring adjectives for the description of three leading characters. Similarly, a study was carried out on the use of the evaluative adjective in academic texts ([Kartal, 2017](#)). The findings suggested that the use of evaluative adjectives can enhance the understanding of the students.

Likewise, [Pierini \(2009\)](#) investigated the usage of adjectives in a corpus of accommodation discourse in the Hotel and Tourism industry. The study reported that adjectives had been characterized by semantic and collocational restrictions. This study included three types of adjectives, the descriptive adjectives that described the details of the hotel, the experiential adjectives that expressed emotions and sensory perceptions, and the evaluative adjectives used to express overwhelmingly positive attitudes.

[Fragaki \(2009\)](#) conducted a corpus-based study of adjectives in the corpus of Greek texts. This study identified ten different forms of adjectives in the corpus that were descriptive, evaluative, classifying, deicing, specialized, color, verbal, relational, indefinite, and quantitative adjectives. Each category has been evaluated by frequency. Descriptive adjectives are used for the description of the properties of nouns and pronouns.

Adjectives like silly, stupid, spendthrift, and obstinate are descriptive adjectives. Descriptive adjectives cannot be measured and compared in empirical terms. On the other hand, evaluative adjectives describe the properties of a Noun and pronoun that can be measured and compared.

The purpose of this analysis is to critically examine the protagonist of the play in order to explore the portrayal of women in the play *A Doll's House* by concentrating on the descriptive adjectives used for the female character, Nora. The character of Nora as a representative of Norwegian women holds central importance in literature. She is often believed to have very judiciously played the role of a typical Norwegian woman. Her role and situation in the play, by and large, present the situation of Norwegian women at the time this play was written. In the present work, we examined the role of adjectives in the description of the problem that Nora, as a woman, faces in her home and society.

## Research Methodology

This research is mainly quantitative because corpus tools have been used to find the frequency of adjectives used for the representation of women in the play. This method is used to identify gender stereotypes and their thematic meanings by highlighting concordance lines and qualitatively analyzing the findings. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are, therefore used in this study. In this study, the researcher analyzed the adjectives used for the female character or protagonist of the play in order to depict the woman. A corpus of 23,444 was compiled using the online version of the play, *A Doll's House* written by Henrik Ibsen. AntConc (Anthony, 2007) corpus analysis toolkit has been used to analyze the data. First of all, for this study, we converted the PDF format file into text form using AntFile Converter. Second, the text was tagged using TagAnt and then analyzed using AntConc software, which has five main options: Concordance, Clusters/N-grams, Collocates, Wordlist, and Keyword list. Only the Wordlist and the Concordance options were used for this study. The Wordlist was added to TagAnt, and the tagged adjectives were taken from KWIC (Keyword in context) for analysis. The concordance pattern for each adjective was explored, and a copy of the same in the form of a screenshot was used in the explanation below to discuss the context of each adjective.

## Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Feminist Theory and Interactionist theory because Feminist theory and Interactionist theory of discrimination deal with gender-based inequality and discrimination. Since the primary aim of the study is the portrayal of women in Norwegian society, the feminist theory was used.

The feminist theory stresses the experiences of women and highlights that women in various societies are being subordinated and subjugated. In other words, the primary concern of the theory is gender discrimination faced by women. This theory emphasized gender inequality. This theory is augmentation the theory of Feminism. Discrimination, objectification, sexual harassment, patriarchy, oppression, and stereotyping are the themes explored by Feminism. It focuses on the social roles of men and women, their experience of work, and their interests. This theory sheds light on discrimination against women, how women are oppressed, subjugated, and abused by men.

Interactionist discrimination theory is a theoretical and social perspective that discusses the social issues facing society (Little, 2012). It is a study of how people's interactions shape society. Language plays a very important role in defining social realities because social realities are made up of language. In language, the concept of sexism explores the traditional and social role of women discrimination and gender stereotypes and focuses on male dominance. In our local languages, we can observe that women are being undervalued by men and society. Therefore, the role of language in gender inequality cannot be undermined.

## Data Analysis

The data selected for this study consists of the text of the play *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen in a text format that can be used conveniently for AntConc. The analysis of the adjectives and the interpretations are closely

interlinked therefore, the adjectives must be interpreted immediately. All adjectives used in the play are not feasible for this study because we wanted to explore the use of adjectives for the leading character of the play and therefore the top ten adjectives used have been selected for the analysis.

As we can see in the graph below that the most frequently used adjective for Nora is *little* with a frequency of 38. The second most commonly used adjective is *dear* with a frequency of 21, followed by *sweet* and *poor* with a frequency of 8. The other adjectives that we can see in the graph are *spendthrift*, *thoughtless*, *silly*, *miserable*, *obstinate*, and *foolish*. The explanation below on the adjective with their linguistic context shows how the adjectives used for women represent the overall situation of women of the Norwegian society.

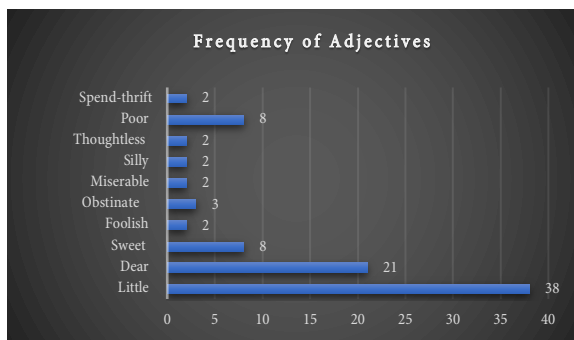


Figure 1: Most Commonly Used Adjectives for NORA

### Little as an Adjective

boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a **little**, Anne. My **sweet little** baby doll! (Takes the take her for a **little**, Anne. My **sweet little** baby doll! (Takes the MAID wife who has the wit to be a **little bit** clever—MRS. LINDE. I don't understand me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a **little bit** imprudent? Nora (sits up straight). Is it down the stage). Sometimes one has a tiny **little bit** of influence, I should hope. Because one Oh, can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into **little bits**! Helmer (sadly). I see. See. An abyss has opened that I had a helpless mother and two **little** brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; to him at all. Helmer. And I very **little**, but I have not for a long time to your poor beating heart. It will come, **little by little**, Nora, believe me. Tomorrow morning you look my charming little Capri maiden—my capricious **little** Capri maiden, I should say—on my arm: the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming **little** Capri maiden—my capricious little Capri maiden. 't happen; it is impossible—I have three **little** children. (Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, can know. Nora. Show it, then; think of my **little** children. Krogstad, Have you and your husband thought the door.) Nora (pale with terror). Deprave my **little** children? Poison my home? (A short pause. Then your word—(Going up to her.) Keep your **little** Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They make bold to suppose that you have a **little** clearer idea, than you had yesterday, of what the first time—quite alone with my shy **little** darling! All this evening I have longed for be all alone with you—you fascinating, charming **little** darling! Nora. Don't look at me like I obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet **little** darlings! MRS. LINDE. So it has all had lot to do. Run away in, my sweet **little** darlings! (She gets them into the room by

Figure 2: Adjective LITTLE with its linguistic context

bite you? No, dogs don't bite nice **little** dolly children. You mustn't look at the . You ought to have come to town a **little** earlier, Christine. Certainly Torvald does under shall we two wear at the next? Helmer. **Little** featherbrain!—are you thinking of the next already takes her playfully by the ear.) The same **little** featherhead! Suppose, now, that borrowed fifty pound pieces? Helmer. Of course you couldn't, poor **little** girl. You had the best of intentions to 't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty **little** hands—Nora (clapping her hands). No, Torvald, I manage them. I have had to save a **little** here and there, where I could, you understand. I haven't (calls out from his room). Is that my **little** lark twittering out there? Nora (busy opening so have bought. HELMER. Don't disturb me. (A **little** later, he opens the door and looks into can understand that being with Torvald is a **little** like being with papa—(Enter MAID from the Helmer (putting his papers together). Now then, **little** Miss Obstinate. Nora (breathlessly). Torvald—what than you in many ways and have a **little** more experience. Let me tell you this—you the performance was a trifle too realistic—a **little** more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible. lly and absolutely at your service, you **helpless little** mortal. Ah, by the way, first of all seems so silly and insignificant. Helmer. Does my **little** Nora acknowledge that at last? Nora (standing beh poor beating heart. It will come, **little** by **little**, Nora, believe me. Tomorrow morning you will look allover. What is this?—such a cold, set face! My poor **little** Nora, I quite understand; you don't feel er. (Holds out his hand to her.) That is why my sweet **little** Nora must promise me not to plead his mother to me when I was little, Nurse. **Little** Nora, poor dear, had no other mother but me. Nora. — Helmer. You can't deny it, my dear **little** Nora. (Puts his arm round her waist.) It

Figure 3: Adjective LITTLE with its linguistic context

was obliged to, if I wanted to be **little** Nora's nurse. Nora. Yes, but how could  
 ot beensokindlydisposedandhelpfultohim. Helmer. My **little** Nora, there is an important difference between y  
 - Helmer. What's that? You're joking, my **little** Nora! You won't-you won't? Am  
 a good mother to me when I was **little**, Nurse. **Little** Nora, poor dear, had no other  
 er. Eitheryouhaveverybadmemory or you know very **little** of business. I shall be obliged to remind  
 ous to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so **little** of the burdens and troubles of life. Nora.  
 troubles of life. Nora. I-? I know so **little** of them? Nora (tosses her head and crosses  
 , a man like me-even he has a **little** of what is called feeling, you know. Nora.  
 , Christine. And I shall have one, just a **little** one-or at most two. (Walking about.) I  
 opens the door on the left.) Nurse. The **little** ones are begging so hard to be allowed  
 her.) Goodbye, Torvald. I won't see the **little** ones. I know they are in better hands  
 was only the first moment-You are a **little** paler, Christine, and perhaps a little thinner.  
 can easily be put in order-just a **little** patience. Nora. Yes, I will go and get  
 . Wouldn't that be fun? Helmer. What are **little** people called that are always wasting money? N  
 did? Helmer. Of course!-if only this obstinate **little** person can get her way! Do you suppose  
 . But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet **little** person. What are we to do with her?  
 of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such **little** persons are! Nora. It's a shame to  
 show so much courage-Nora. Mr. Krogstad, a **little** respect for my husband, please. Krogstad. Certain  
 it dull. Helmer (smiling). But there was precious **little** result, Nora. Nora. Oh, you shouldn't tease  
 because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you **little** rogue, I am sure you did not mean

Figure 4: Adjective LITTLE with its linguistic context

you shall be for me after this, my **little** scared, helpless darling. Havenoanxietyaboutanyt  
 , and make your mind easy again, my frightened **little** singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure; I have broad  
 . (Puts his hand on her head.) My precious **little** singing-bird! (He goes into his room and  
 be so wild and nervous. Be my own **little** skylark, as you used. Nora. Yes, dear, I  
 . Helmer (kissing her on the forehead). Now my **little** skylark is speaking reasonably. Did you notice wh  
 orvald. Helmer (following her). Come, come, my **little** skylark must not droop her wings. What is  
 the doorway on the right). Where's my **little** skylark? Nora (going to him with her arms  
 had happened. Exactly as before, I was your **little** skylark, your doll, which you would in future  
 been here? (Shakes his finger at her.) My **little** songbird must never do that again. A songbird  
 squirrels have, Torvald. Helmer. You are an odd **little** soul. Very like your father. You always find  
 happen. How are the children? Nurse. The poor **little** souls are playing with their Christmas presents,  
 n hand.) Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my **little** spendthrift been wasting money again? Nora. Yes, b  
 arm round her waist.) It's a sweet **little** spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of  
 parcels). Yes, it is! Helmer. Is it my **little** squirrel bustling about? Nora. Yes! Helmer. When  
 droop her wings. What is this! Is my **little** squirrel out of temper? (Taking out his purse.)  
 room.) Nora. Torvald. Helmer. Yes. Nora. If your **little** squirrel were to ask you for something very,  
 half opened, and KROGSTAD appears, he waits a **little**; the game goes on.) Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs.  
 good. Krogstad. Does your husband love you so **little**, then? He knows what I can expose you  
 s the bell. (She tidies the room a **little**.) There's some one at the door. What  
 are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a **little** thinner. MRS. LINDE. And much, much older, Nora.

Figure 5: Adjective LITTLE with its linguistic context

are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a **little** thinner. MRS. LINDE. And much, much older, Nora.  
 year we really can let ourselves go a **little**. This is the first Christmas that we have  
 with you like this, why I speak so **little** to you, keep away from you, and only sendastolen  
 ! Perhaps we shall be able to take a **little** trip-perhaps I shall see the sea again!  
 ! Nora. Didn't you say so yourself a **little** while ago-that you dare not trust me  
 the dining-room. NORA stands still for a **little** while, as if to compose herself. Then she  
 rather go in to your wife for a **little** while. (Shuts the door and sees Mrs. LINDE.)  
 I shall wear? Helmer. Aha! so my obstinate **little** woman is obliged to get someone to come

Figure 6: Adjective LITTLE with its linguistic context

Some adjectives are often used in A Doll's House to foreground the attributes of the leading female character. One of the most common adjectives in the play is "Little," which Helmer used several times to refer to his wife, "Nora." The above concordance lines exposed how the word "little" has been used in the play so many times. Helmer used some words like My little skylark, My little squirrel, My little spendthrift, My little

Nora, My little person, My little singing bird, etc. The words used by Helmer show that he treated Nora just as a toy, a child, or a pet because he used several animal names to refer to his wife 'Nora'. He just considered his wife a doll who is there to be admired and teased as often as he likes. Helmer appears to be a very selfish and self-centred person because he treated his wife in a very indifferent manner, not taking care of her emotional and personal needs. She was repeatedly treated as an inferior being and humiliated here often as he liked. The frequent use of the adjective little does have some symbolic importance. The word little refers to the littleness or smallness of the person for whom the word little is used. This means Nora is not an important character in the family as Helmer.

The adjective "little" that has been used so many times in the play means something small in quantity or size, small and tiny, delicate, submissive, and tender. In the play, the word "little" was used to sketch Nora's character, because she was so weak and fragile, dependent on her husband for everything. In other words, the word little belittles the role and importance of the main character, Nora, in her home and society.

### Dear as an Adjective

own little skylark, as you used. Nora. Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you  
 heverydayandIhadmypoorsickTorvaldlook after. My dear, kind father—I never saw him again, Christine.  
 , Torvald— Helmer. You can't deny it, my dear little Nora. (Puts his arm round her waist.)  
 . Nora (jumping up and going to him). Oh, dear, nice Doctor Rank, I never meant that at  
 . Nora. Yes, it's too late. Helmer. My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are  
 keep his post in the bank. Helmer. My dear Nora, it is his post that I have  
 ys prevented me. MRS. LINDE. I quite understand, dear. Nora. It was very bad of me, Christine.  
 . I shall not sleep tonight. Helmer. But, my dear Nora— Nora (looking at her watch). It is  
 , I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora. Nora. No, it would never have come  
 elmer (goinguptoher). Areyoureallysoafraid of it, dear? Nora. Yes, so dreadfully afraid of it. Let  
 this world of cares. MRS. LINDE. But, my dear Nora, you have just told me all your  
 in my dress until tomorrow. Helmer. But, my dear Nora, you look so worn out. Have you  
 married. Nora (putting her arms round her neck). Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to  
 ar.) And now goodbye! Helmer. Goodbye, goodbye, dear old man! Nora. Sleep well, Doctor Rank. Rank.  
 lmer. But, my dearest Nora— Nora. Please, Torvald dear—please, please—only an hour more. Helmer. Not  
 damned! Rank. Are you mad? MRS. LINDE. Nora, dear—I Rank. Say it, here he is! Nora (hiding  
 mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and  
 . It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage— Nora.  
 with it. Helmer. But, Nora— Nora. Oh, do! dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap  
 encouragetoopenup that question again? Nora. Yes, dear, you must do as I ask; you must

Figure 7: Adjective DEAR with its linguistic context

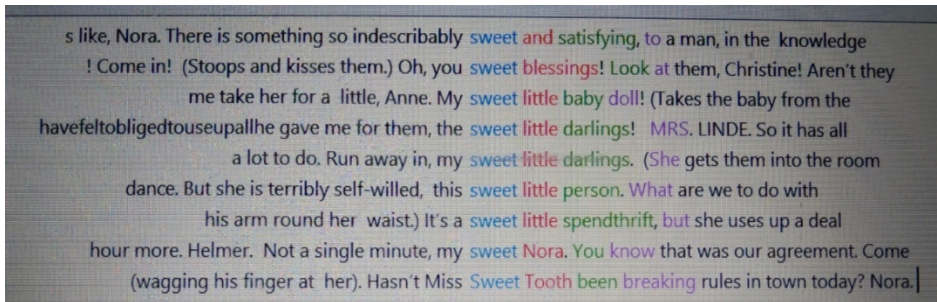
am narrow-minded? Nora. No, just the opposite, dear—and it is exactly for that reason. Helmer.  
 – MRS. LINDE. Pleasedon'tthinkofit! Goodbye, Nora dear, and many thanks. Nora. Goodbye for the present.  
 I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me. MRS. LINDE. What do  
 , but I don't know— Nora. Mrs. Linde, dear; Christine Linde. Helmer. Ofcourse. Aschoolfriend  
 dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; criticise me, and correct me as you play.  
 eems. Nora (putting her hands on his shoulders). Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you  
 Nora (putting her hands on his shoulders). Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you away  
 in the lamp. (Goes over to the stove.) Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.  
 all alone, and you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands— Nora (clapping  
 . (With a swift glance round.) Ah, yes!—these dear familiar rooms. You are very happy and cosy  
 us what you will be? Rank. Yes, my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind  
 when I was little. Nurse. Little Nora, poor dear, had no other motherbutme. Nora. Andifmylittle  
 his hat in his hand.) Nora. Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him? Helmer. Yes,  
 iosity, Christine. MRS. LINDE. Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?  
 fire.) Nora. Don't be long away, Torvald dear. Helmer. About an hour, not more. Nora. Are  
 eventakeapeninyourhand. Willyou promise, Torvald dear? Helmer. I promise. This evening I will be  
 .) But what is this? Nora. What is what, dear? Helmer. Rankledmetoexpectsplendidtransformatio  
 HELMER). I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear. Helmer. Was that the dressmaker? Nora. No, it  
 him). Are you sure of that? Helmer. My dear, I have often seen it in the course  
 own little skylark, as you used. Nora. Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you

Figure 8: Adjective DEAR with its linguistic context

Another adjective repeatedly used in the play is "Dear." This adjective is used so many times in the play that Nora used this word to address her father in order to show love and affection for her father. This word is mainly used for love and affection when one is loved and admired by another person. Helmer also used this word several times to refer to his wife Nora, e.g. my dear little Nora, my dear Nora, my dear little skylark, etc.

At the surface level, it is used to express Helmer's affection and love for his wife, Nora. But Helmer's frequent use of this adjective in referring to his wife has different connotations. It seems at times that Helmer, Nora's Husband, considers him a superior being, enjoying a much higher position in his home and society. It suggests that Helmer was at the top of the pedestal, enjoying a higher position. The recurrent use of the word "dear" by Helmer perpetuated the masculinity and sovereignty of man as superior in society and sometimes used a few words to show his preponderance and superiority over a woman.

### Sweet as an Adjective

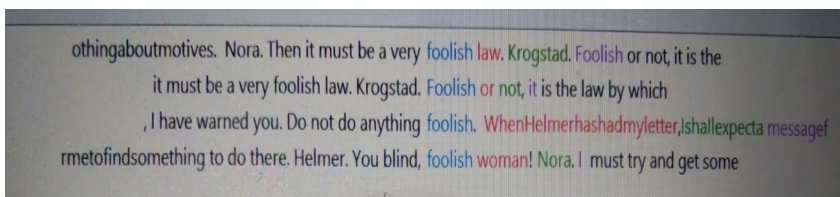


**Figure 9:** Adjective SWEET with its linguistic context

In this play, the adjective "sweet" has been used several times too. Helmer used this word in reference to his wife. Some examples are "sweet little baby doll", "sweet little person", "sweet Nora", and "sweet little spendthrift". The usual use of this particular adjective had the effect of creating a collective, constructed perspective for women in an exceedingly male-dominated society. In some patriarchal societies, women are culturally created as attractively beautiful and sweet to the eyes in their demeanor and behavior. As Nora used this word several times to expose her children to their attractiveness, Helmer also used the word "sweet" to refer to Nora to reveal that a woman must be sweet, so he instructed his wife not to eat macaroons, as they would spoil her teeth, and she might look ugly. The use of the adjective, "sweet" can possibly have two connotations in the play. First, Helmer perceives women as an object of attraction and beauty, and secondly, this adjective could also mean that women were like children and therefore instructed and warned as much as possible. This shows the dependence of Nora on her husband.

The use of the adjective "sweet" shows that Helmer considered Nora just an object of attraction and beauty, and he was just attracted to her sexually. This implies that for Helmer, Nora is just an object of beauty.

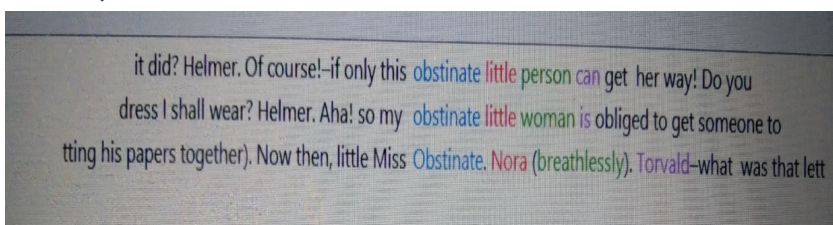
### Foolish as an Adjective



**Figure 10:** Adjective FOOLISH with its linguistic context

Another adjective used for Nora in the play is “foolish”. This word was repeatedly used by Helmer to humiliate and degrade his wife, Nora. Foolish is a word that is used for stupidity and is used for the person who is less wise and has no sense. The frequent use of the word, foolish, must have tormented her psychologically, making her believe that she is an inferior being in society. This inferiority complex and a desire to get over that complex must have contributed to her decision of leaving the house. Helmer has always perceived his wife as a foolish and ignorant woman who is ill-mannered and does not know how to operate in society. He considered her to be a shallow-brained woman, but he liked her foolishness and incomprehension because he wanted her not to be independent. According to Helmer's perception that a girl is sharp-witted and intellectual, then she is independent enough to make her own decisions and could fulfil all her desires on her own. Therefore, in order to maintain his dominance and supremacy, he wanted his wife to be foolish and helpless.

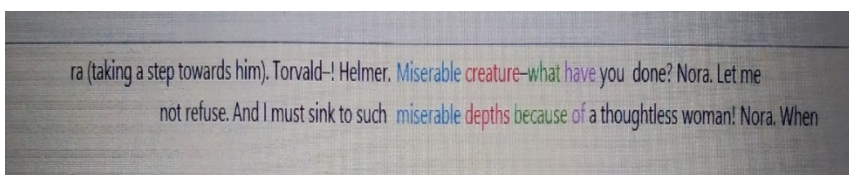
### Obstinate as an Adjective



**Figure 11:** Adjective OBSTINATE with its linguistic context

Obstinate is the word used in the play to refer to the leading female character of Nora. Helmer used this word to refer to his wife because he had been demeaning his wife throughout the story. He used that word for Nora because, according to Helmer, she was resistant to discipline and guidance. She was stubbornly tenacious and headstrong. Helmer always considered himself to be of the highest rank and always lowered the rank of his wife to make her a passive character. The use of the adjective, obstinate, suggests that Nora is not allowed by her husband to hold an independent opinion about anything. He, therefore, tortures her psychologically by using this adjective. This shows the controlling and disciplining nature of Helmer, Nora's husband.

### Miserable as an Adjective



**Figure 12:** Adjective MISERABLE with its linguistic context

Miserable is used as an adjective for Nora by her husband, Helmer, to make her feel as if she is a crestfallen and low spirited woman. He always used to treat his wife with contempt by using several deposing words for her. This use of such words made her suffer from an inferiority complex and made her believe that she was an inferior woman deserving pity. This suggests that women in Norwegian society were not treated well. Moreover, they were considered inferior and miserable by the male members of society.



## Silly as an Adjective

will do; everything I think of seems so **silly and insignificant**. Helmer. Does my little Nora ac  
frighten me like that!—I am not so **silly as he thinks**. (Begins to busy herself putting  
at her.) But "Nora, Nora" is not so **silly as you think**. We have not been in  
. Helmer. Oh, don't let us have any **silly excuses**. Nora (taking a step towards him). Torval  
than I thought. Nora. I am in a **silly mood today**. Rank. So it seems. Nora (putting  
to surprise me with. Nora. It was very **silly of me** to want to do that. Helmer.

**Figure 13:** Adjective SILLY with its linguistic context

Silly is the word that is commonly used for a defenceless and trivial person. Helmer used to address his wife by saying that she was a silly girl because he saw her as a ridiculously frivolous and trivial woman who was thoughtless and helpless without her husband or father. This shows the patriarchal nature of Norwegian society, where men were thought to be wiser and smarter, and women were not.

## Thoughtless as an Adjective

made him angry, Christine. He said I was **thoughtless**, and that it was his duty as my  
h. (Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.) What a **thoughtless creature** I am, chattering away like this. My  
obstinacy! Because you chose to give him a **thoughtless promise** that you would speak for him, I  
sink to such miserable depths because of a **thoughtless woman!** Nora. When I am out of the

**Figure 14 :** Adjective THOUGHTLESS with its linguistic context

Nora was considered a tactless and inconsiderate creature as well. His husband used this term because he saw Nora as the person who lacks concern and cares for others. Helmer considered her to be impudent and indiscreet, so he used "thoughtless" to humiliate his wife.

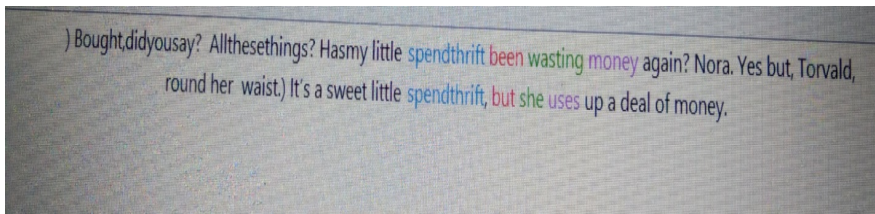
## Poor as an Adjective

's claws; I will bring peace to your **poor beating heart**. It will come, little by little,  
't mean to say you are jealous of **poor Christine?** Rank. Yes, I am. She will be my successor in  
. LINDE. What do you mean, Nora? Nora (gently). **Poor Christine, you are a widow**. MRS. LINDE. Yes;  
gerous disease. He has consumption of the spine, **poor creature**. His father was a horrible man who  
creature I am, chattering away like this. My **poor, dear Christine, do forgive me**. MRS. LINDE. What  
me when I was little. Nurse. Little Nora, **poor dear, had no other mother but me**. Nora. And if my lit  
get such a good place by it? A **poor girl who has got into trouble** should be  
a mere laughing matter, the whole thing. My **poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father'**  
new year. Nora. Then that was why this **poor Krogstad— Helmer. Hm!** Nora (leans against the ba  
are a lawyer? You must be a very **poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad**. Krogstad. Maybe. But matter  
to pieces? Helmer. Of course you couldn't; **poor little girl. You had the best of intentions**  
it is all over. What is this?—such a cold, set face! My **poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don't**  
might happen. How are the children? Nurse. The **poor little souls are playing with their Christmas pre**  
. Now it is at an end, Nora. My **poor mother needs me** no more, for she is |  
come out of your own necessities of life, **poor Nora?** Nora. Of course. Besides, I was the  
to shut himself up and die. Helmer. My **poor old friend!** Certainly I knew we should not have him ve  
. Nora. It was very bad of me, Christine. **Poor thing, how you must have suffered**. And he

**Figure 15:** Adjective POOR with its linguistic context

Poor is the word that is used for Nora because she is in a lower and inferior position because she relied heavily on her husband. She was not an independent woman. She was weak and submissive; therefore, this word was used by Helmer to humiliate and abuse his wife. The adjective, poor, also suggests that Nora does not possess any property or money. She is, therefore, dependent on her husband for her financial needs.

### Spendthrift as an Adjective



**Figure 16:** Adjective SPENDTHRIFT with its linguistic context

Helmer used this word for his wife because he always considered his wife to be a person who spends too much money, carelessly and irresponsibly. According to Helmer, Nora was a heedless person, and she spends her money extravagantly. So, he used the word "spendthrift" for her a few times in the play. The use of this adjective also suggests that women in Norwegian society were not responsible and therefore were not fit for saving money.

### Conclusion

The present study explored the women representation in the play *A Doll's House* by aiming at the frequently used adjectives that have been used in the play for the leading female character "Nora". This study sought to find how women are depicted in the play to see whether the adjectives that are used for the female discriminate against the women or not. In order to achieve the specific objectives of this research on the representation of women in the play, we have collected all the adjectives from the play, in particular those that have been used for the female protagonist of the play. We used AntConc concordance software for getting the highly frequent adjectives and the contextual interpretations of those frequent adjectives used for a woman in the play. The findings of the study show that adjectives can have an important effect on the shaping of identity and personality of a person in a certain society.

In the play, a lot of insulting adjectives were used which show her place in society. Nora is representative of Norwegian society which appeared to be more patriarchal when the play under study was written. This implies that women in Norwegian society were considered inferior to men. The common attributes of Nora that have been presented with the help of the descriptive adjectives suggest that women in Norwegian society were considered to be weak, thoughtless, and unwise. The adjectives reflect the general attitude of society towards women because adjectives are a very important part of any language. It is through language human attitudes are expressed. These adjectives are the expression of social norms prevalent at the time when the play was written. In other words, the kind of adjectives, the writer has used for the description of Nora are the characteristics of women of that time. Women are submissive, fragile, dependent, careless, and stupid. The play presents a picture of a typical patriarchal society.

This study has very successfully highlighted the predicament of Norwegian women as depicted by Ibsen in his play, *A Doll's House*. The present research will help future researchers interested in digital humanities. The discipline of digital humanities has emerged as a separate field that exploits the use of language software for the analysis of works of literature, history, and philosophy.

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