JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES

Vol. 14 No. 4 ISSN 2221-1152

Editorial

Journal of Social and Development Sciences (JSDS) is a scholarly journal that deals with the disciplines of social and development sciences. JSDS publishes research work that meaningfully contributes to the theoretical bases of contemporary developments in society, business and related disciplines. The work submitted for publication consideration in JSDS should address empirical and theoretical contributions in the subjects related to the scope of the journal in particular and allied theories and practices in general. The scope of JSDS includes: sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, international relations, linguistics, history, public relations, hospitality & tourism and project management. Author(s) should declare that work submitted to the journal is original, not under consideration for publication by another journal, and that all listed authors approve its submission to JSDS. It is JSDS policy to welcome submissions for consideration, which are original, and not under consideration for publication by another journal at the same time. Author (s) can submit: Research Paper, Conceptual Paper, Case Studies and Book Review. The current issue of JSDS consists of papers of scholars from Malaysia, Morocco, Lesotho and South Africa. Influence of Organizational Climate on Medical Employee Performance, Exploring Gender Dynamics in Cinema, Impact of Work Distributive Justice on Patient's Satisfaction, Conservation Agriculture Adoption Among Maize and Beans Farmers and Role of Men in Curbing the Scourge of Violence against Women and Children are some of the major practices and concepts examined in these studies. Journal received research submissions related to all aspects of major themes and tracks. All the submitted papers were first assessed, by the editorial team for relevance and originality of the work and blindly peer-reviewed by the external reviewers depending on the subject matter of the paper. After the rigorous peer-review process, the submitted papers were selected based on originality, significance, and clarity of the purpose. The current issue will therefore be a unique offer, where scholars will be able to appreciate the latest results in their field of expertise and to acquire additional knowledge in other relevant fields.

Prof. Nek Kamal Yeop Yunus, Ph. D.
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PAPERS

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES (JSDS)
VOL. 14, NO. 4(2024), (ISSN 2221-1152)

The Influence of Organizational Climate on Medical Employee Performance: Empirical Evidence from Hail Health Cluster

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Abstract: The organizational climate is a very important factor that provides comfort to the employee. The performance of the employee intensively depends on the working situation. The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between organizational climate (OC) and employee performance, to find out the relationship between knowledge transfer (KT) and employee performance (EP), to investigate the role of incorporating technology as a moderator between OC and KT as well as KT and EP in the context of Hail healthcare. For the data collection cross-sectional method was adopted and data was collected from medical and non-medical staff with the help of a questionnaire from February to April 2024. After the data collection, the SEM-PLS regression model was used for the extraction of the results. This study found very important results that OC has a positive and significant impact on collaboration among the employees and enhances the activity of KT. Further, KT also has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. This study also found that incorporating technology has become a very important aspect of maintaining the best OC and knowledge transfer as well as Knowledge transfer and performance of employees. This study is unique in its aspect and provides a clear path to another sector for attaining the best employee performance with the help of climate, knowledge transfer, and incorporating advanced technologies.

Keywords: *Knowledge sharing, organizational climate, employee Performance, incorporating technologies*

1. Introduction

Organizational climate is a perilous factor that influences employee performance across various sectors, including healthcare (Pradoto et al., 2022). From the perspective of the medical sector, the organizational climate includes the shared opinions of employees related to their workplace, which encompasses social links, strategies, and rehearses. A significant and positive organizational climate can improve job satisfaction levels, performance, and inspiration, while a negative environment can reduce output and higher revenue rates (Judge et al., 2020).

Therefore, this research is about the Hail Health Cluster, which is in Saudi Arabia, and gives an exclusive setting to discover the convoluted link between organizational climate and medical employee performance (Brinson, 2020). Thus, the healthcare sector tackles the problem of how organizational climate impacts employee performance, high demands for efficiency and quality of care and satisfaction, and how is it important for fostering healthcare delivery and patient consequences (Pradoto et al., 2022).

Recent research has shown different scopes of organizational climate which include communication, and employee recognition (Chaudhuri et al., 2024; Hadi et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2024), and leadership support (Kwarteng et al., 2024; Naidoo et al., 2024), which has a positive impact on employee engagement and effectiveness. Moreover, these dimensions are linked by empirical evidence to performance consequences in the healthcare sector which remains limited, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia (Saad Alessa, 2021).

Additionally, this research fills this gap by observing the impact of organizational climate on medical employee performance in the Hail Health Cluster of Saudi Arabia. (Alshammary & Ali, 2024). This study will give visions that can update management practices or donate to the progress of a more supportive workplace by examining the perception of healthcare employee and their performance level (Laï et al., 2020). Thus, promoting a positive organizational climate can not only improve employee performance but also improve the patient satisfaction level in the healthcare sector (Radu, 2023).

2. Literature Review

This part of the study describes the literature review of recent studies on the variable. For the theoretical implementation, this research used the technology acceptance theory. Technology acceptance theory shows the significance of technological acceptance in various sectors including the healthcare sector. All variables are well-defined.

Organizational climate

Organizational climate is the joint observation and attitudes of workers regarding their workplace. It includes different components like communication patterns, leadership style, and the degree of support provided to staff and all team members by the organization (Pérez-Vallejo & Fernández-Muñoz, 2020). A better organizational climate promotes collaboration and open communication skills which improves worker self-confidence and engagement. Furthermore, teamwork is important for the satisfaction and care of patients in the healthcare sector and a supportive and positive organizational climate is important for encouraging workers to perform better (Mabona et al., 2022). Research has shown that a positive organizational climate not only enhances job satisfaction levels but also higher revenue rates, or promotes the effectiveness of healthcare delivery (Alshammary & Ali, 2024).

Knowledge transfer

Knowledge transfer includes the processes by which singular shares, and implication of knowledge within an organization. Effective knowledge transfer plays an important role in adjusting high patient care and promoting clinical practices It can happen through training sessions and joint practices that can inspire the sharing of the best knowledge between medical staff (Gruber et al., 2020). Moreover, a positive organizational climate facilitates knowledge transfer by fostering open communication skills and permitting workers to feel free and learn from teamwork and influence joint abilities (Berraies & Chouiref, 2023). This act is significant in a dynamic healthcare climate, where quick advancement in medical knowledge or technology is important for continued learning and adaptation (Perkonigg et al., 2021).

Employee performance

Employee performance is a complicated perspective that includes efficiency and effectiveness in which healthcare sector employee fulfill their responsibilities (Almohtaseb et al., 2020). It is affected by different components which include competencies and organizational climate in which workers work. Experts in the healthcare sector are important for giving high-quality patient care and satisfaction and getting positive health consequences (McLaughlin et al., 2020). Therefore, a high-performance level involves clinical consequences and patient care scores. Organizational climate that describes recognition, and professional progress, healthcare sectors can improve employee performance and lead to enhanced service delivery and patient care (Mutonyi et al., 2022).

Incorporating technology

In the context of the healthcare sector incorporating technology has described how medical experts work, improving efficiency and data management systems (Haleem et al., 2022). Technologies that include EHRs and health informatics equipment facilitate unlimited access to information and allow workers to make better decisions quickly (Al-Shorbaji & Al-Shorbaji, 2021). Furthermore, incorporating technology can increase training and knowledge transfer through e-learning programs and allow for professional progress (Grubišić et al., 2020). Moreover, the successful use of technology includes a supportive organizational climate that inspires flexibility or innovation. When workers feel free and supported in their integration of technology, they are likely to hold this equipment, leading to enhanced performance and patient consequences (Burnett & Lisk, 2021).

Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

Organizational climate and employee performance

The link between organizational climate and employee performance is well-defined in different sectors, mostly in the healthcare sector (Mutonyi et al., 2022). A positive organizational climate promotes an atmosphere where all workers feel free and liberal to the best of their roles (Naz et al., 2020). Some dynamics like

communication, effective leadership style, and recognition of effort give expressively to workers' satisfaction and performance (Ali & Anwar, 2021). When healthcare workers identify their organizations as helpful sectors they are likely to establish progress and development, which affects the value of patient satisfaction level and operating proficiency (Şanliöz et al., 2023). On the other hand, a negative organizational climate can lead to disconnection, exhaustion, and high revenue rates, badly impacting total employee performance and patient satisfaction levels and consequences(Yanchus et al., 2020). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H1: *Organizational climate has a positive link with employee performance*

Organizational climate and knowledge transfer

Organizational climate plays an important role in simplifying knowledge transfer with employees' performance. A positive organizational climate is described by belief, sincerity, and teamwork which inspires individuals to share their knowledge improving joint learning within the organization (Nauman et al., 2022). In the healthcare sector where fast progress in medical knowledge and rehearses happen, a positive climate is important for confirming that serious information runs freely between team members. Also, when workers feel safe to precise their ideas and ask queries, knowledge transfer becomes more operative, leading to enhanced medical observation and modernization. (Kmieciak, 2021). A positive organizational climate not only promotes familiar knowledge sharing but also supports official training creativities, confirming that workers are constantly informed on best practices and evolving tendencies. (Wen & Wang, 2022). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H2: *Organizational climate has a positive link with knowledge transfer*

Knowledge transfer and employee performance

Knowledge transfer is related to employee performance, especially in the context of the healthcare sector (Lee et al., 2020). Effective knowledge sharing and application permit healthcare experts to be updated about the recent progress in the medical sector, ultimately improving their capability to give high-quality healthcare (King et al., 2021). When workers are involved in knowledge transfer, they feel free and prepared to tackle the problems and implantation of best practices, analyzing enhanced employee performance consequences (Choi et al., 2020). Moreover, knowledge transfer promotes a culture of learning which improves job satisfaction levels among team members (Abdullah et al., 2021). Furthermore, the self-confidence of workers in providing high-quality patient care also rises, which leads to high-performance levels and best patient consequences (Abdullah et al., 2021). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H3: *Knowledge transfer has a significant link with employee performance*

Knowledge transfer as a mediator

Knowledge transfer works as a mediator in the link between organizational climate and employee performance. A positive organizational climate inspires knowledge-sharing behaviors, which improves employee performance (Kim & Park, 2020). A positive organizational climate encourages workers to use valuable info and resources by facilitating effective communication and joint effort which enhances their ability and proficiencies. (Jokanović et al., 2020). Knowledge transfer as a mediator shows the importance of a working environment where knowledge transfer positively impacts on inspiration of workers but is also integrated into everyday practices. (Zhou et al., 2020). Organizations that allow knowledge transfer to check promoted employee performance consequences, as workers control their shared skills to improve their working ability in giving patient care and getting organizational tasks (Nguyen et al., 2023). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H4: *Knowledge transfer has positive and significant mediate the relationship Organizational climate between employee performances*

Incorporating technology as a moderator

In the healthcare sector incorporating technology can work as a moderator in the link among organizational climate, knowledge transfer, and employee performance. (Pandey et al., 2021). Some technological instruments can improve the knowledge-sharing process and reach precarious knowledge (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). When the organizational climate is positive of technology integration, employees feel free to use these instruments, which is the cause of the smoothness of knowledge transfer. Furthermore, technological integration provides new opportunities for practices and progress or also increases employee performance. (Xie et al., 2020).

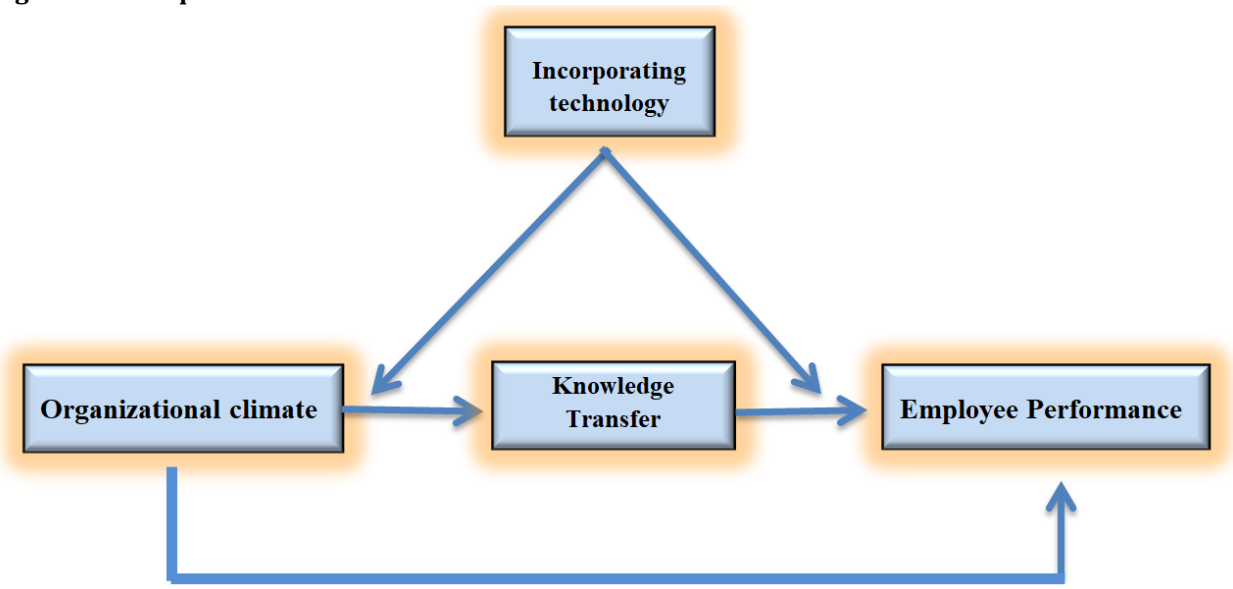
Healthcare workplaces can establish a more professional working atmosphere by leveraging technology, where information is free and all the workers feel free to perform their duties in a better way, finally, increasing patient care and operational efficiency(Salahat, 2021). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H5a: *Incorporating technology has positive and significant moderators on the relationship Organizational climate between knowledge Transfer*

H5b: *Incorporating technology has positive and significant moderators on the relationship knowledge Transfer between employee performances*

On the base of the literature review following conceptual framework is developed.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Developed by author

3. Methodology

This study specifically targeted healthcare professionals (HCPs) working full-time in selected hospitals within the Hail region. This study used cross-sectional data and distributed a well-developed questionnaire among the 250 participants. In return, 180 questionnaires were received with fill required data. The response rate was favorable for further analysis.

Table 1: Demographic variable

Variable	Classification	Percentage
Gender	Male	73.6
	Female	26.3
Participant categories	Nurse	37.85
	Physicians	25.24
	Non-medical staff	12.62
	Dentists	4.72
	Lab technicians	6.31
	Pharmacists	5.36
	Physiotherapists	3.15
	Radiology technicians	4.72

Experience	Less than 1 year	21.4
	2 years to 5 years	38.5
	6 years to 10 years	24.6
	11 years to 20 years	15.5

Measurement scales of variable

The organizational climate is the independent variable and is measured with 5 items adopted from a study by (Hussain et al., 2022). .Employee performance is a dependent variable as measured with 12 items from (Hee et al., 2019). Further, the knowledge transfer is the mediator between OC and EP and it is measured with 3 items adopted from (Kun, 2022; Shannak et al., 2017). Further incorporation technology is a moderator as it is measured with 5 items from (Alolayyan et al., 2020). For this study, all the variables are measured at five Likert scales where, 1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree.

Instruments used for data analysis

For the analysis of data, the current study used SmartPls and applied an SEM test. First of all, a measurement model was conducted for extracting the values of Cronbach alpha values (CA), composite reliability (CR) average variance extracted (AVE), and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Furthermore, the theoretical model was investigated by analyzing the discriminant validity (DV) and correlation. Moreover, common method bias was used, such as "variance inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R2), effect size (F2), and predictive relevance (Q2).

4. Findings

Assessment of Measurement Model

Cronbach's alpha assesses the reliability of the measurement items used in this research. The measurement model explains the factor loading, Cronbach alpha values (CA), composite reliability (CR) average variance extracted (AVE), and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The following table elaborates on all the values.

Table 2: Factor loading, CA, CR, and AVE values

Variable	Code	Factor loading	CA	CR	AVE
Organizational climate	OC1	0.76	0.83	0.75	0.61
	OC2	0.80			
	OC3	0.77			
	CO4	0.84			
	CO5	0.81			
Employee performance	EP1	0.78	0.88	0.84	0.66
	EP2	0.82			
	EP3	0.86			
	EP4	0.71			
	EP5	0.85			
	EP6	0.84			
	EP7	0.88			
	EP8	0.79			
Knowledge transfer	KT1	0.86	0.79	0.91	0.67
	KT2	0.83			
	KT3	0.82			
Incorporate technologies	IT1	0.77	0.81	0.85	0.70
	IT2	0.79			
	IT3	0.86			
	IT4	0.80			
	IT5	0.83			

Table 2 explains the factor loading CA, CR, and AVE of the variables. The values of the variable explain that the variables are significant. The table explains the composite reliability of the variable as well as how CA meets

the threshold level. Whereas, the AVE explains the variance of the variable is acceptable. Furthermore, the results of Table 3 also explained that the validity of the model and variable, values of the constructs are high.

Table 3: Discriminant validity (Fornell and Lacker Criterion)

Construct	OC	EP	KT	IT
OC	0.84			
EP	0.52	0.78		
KT	0.42	0.51	0.81	
IT	0.41	0.48	0.46	0.80

Assessment of Structural Model

This model was assessed based on its explanatory power (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and path coefficients (β-values), providing insights into hypothesis testing results.

Table 6: Results of Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta value	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	OC->EP	0.47	3.11	0.004	Accepted
H2	OC->KT	0.41	4.84	0.008	Accepted
H3	KT->EP	0.73	2.67	0.010	Accepted
H4	OC->KT->EP	0.23	7.34	0.000	Accepted
H5a	IT*OC->KT	0.67	3.88	0.009	Accepted
H5b	IT*KT->EP	0.91	4.74	0.031	Accepted

The table explains that Knowledge Transfer has a strong positive effect on Employee Performance (β= 0.73). Additionally, the mediating role of Knowledge Transfer between OC and EP was confirmed (β = 0.23). The statistical significance of these relationships is supported by low p-values (all below 0.01), demonstrating that enhancing organizational commitment can lead to improved employee performance through better knowledge-sharing

Furthermore, the interaction effects of Innovation Teamwork on these relationships were also significant. Specifically, the influence of OC on KT was strengthened by Innovation Teamwork (β = 0.67), and similarly, the relationship between KT and EP was significantly enhanced by IT (β = 0.91). The p-values for these interactions (0.009 for H5a and 0.031 for H5b) indicate their statistical significance.

Discussion

This study has developed a conceptual framework with explains the organizational climate as the independent variable and significantly relates to the employee performance of healthcare professionals. After the data analysis, this study has found that the entire hypotheses are accepted and explains that the relationship between organizational climate and employee performance is well-documented in various fields, particularly in healthcare settings. A positive organizational climate fosters an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and motivated to excel in their roles. Factors such as effective communication, strong leadership, and recognition of efforts contribute significantly to employee satisfaction and performance. When healthcare workers perceive their organization as supportive, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, commitment, and productivity, which directly impact the quality of patient care and operational efficiency. Conversely, a negative organizational climate can lead to disengagement, burnout, and high turnover rates, adversely affecting overall performance and patient outcomes.

Organizational climate plays a significant role in providing knowledge transfer between employees. A climate is categorized by trust, and joint individuals to share info, improving collective learning in the organization (Hussain et al., 2022). In the healthcare sector, where quick progress in medical knowledge and practices takes place, a progressive and helpful climate is important for confirming that important information flows between team members. When workers feel free to show their knowledge, then knowledge transfer becomes more enhanced clinical practices and innovation (Naiwen et al., 2021; Naseem et al., 2020; Naseem et al., 2023). A significant organizational climate not only fosters informal knowledge sharing but also increases formal training advantages, confirming that employees are updated on best practices. Knowledge transfer is

intrinsically linked to employee performance, significantly in the context of the healthcare sector. Effective use permits healthcare experts to be informed about the recent progress in medical practices, ultimately improving their capability to give high-quality care. When workers participate in knowledge transfer, they are better prepared to discourse complicated clinical issues and analyze enhanced performance consequences (Rathi, 2024).

Knowledge transfer works as a mediator in the link between organizational climate and employee performance. Employee performance can be enhanced by knowledge-sharing behavior if the organizational climate has a positive impact on it. A positive organizational climate encourages workers to use valuable info and resources by facilitating effective communication and joint effort which enhances their ability and proficiencies. Knowledge transfer as a mediator shows the importance of a working environment where knowledge transfer positively impacts on inspiration of workers but is also integrated into everyday practices. Organizations that allow knowledge transfer to check promoted employee performance consequences, as workers control their shared skills to improve their working ability in giving patient care and getting organizational tasks.

In the healthcare sector incorporating technology can work as a moderator in the link among organizational climate, knowledge transfer, and employee performance. Some technological instruments can improve the knowledge-sharing process and reach precarious knowledge. When the organizational climate is positive of technology integration, workers are more likely to use these instruments, which is the cause of the smoothness of knowledge transfer.
Furthermore, technological integration gives new opportunities for rehearsal and progress or also increases employee performance. Healthcare sectors can make a more professional working atmosphere by leveraging technology, where knowledge is free and all the workers feel free to perform their duties in a better way, ultimately increasing patient care and satisfaction or operational efficiency. (Muhammad et al., 2019; Sarfraz et al., 2022, 2023).

5. Implications and Limitations

Practical Implications

The practical significance of this model in the Hail Health Cluster shows the vital role of technology in enhancing employee performance. By promoting a significant organizational climate, this model highlights how technology can ease knowledge transfer among healthcare experts and supportive team members. This synergy improves employee performance by promoting communication and ensuring both medical and non-medical staff are equipped with information and instruments that are important for good delivery of service. (Mohsin et al., 2024). For medical staff, this can mean more accurate and timely patient care, while for non-medical staff, it can enhance administrative efficiency and support the overall functioning of the healthcare system.

Theoretical Implications

This study has practical, empirical as well as theoretical implications. This study is grounded in technology acceptance theory with offers important insights for medical and non-medical staff in the context of the healthcare sector. This study explains that the adoption of new technology in work increases the working capacities of the employee. Knowledge transfer is also an important factor in attaining optimal performance from the new staff. Therefore, the current study provides a broader understanding for the reader and administration of the health sector as well as another manufacturing sector for providing the best OC for employees, where this employee can provide and share experience and this activity can enhance the overall performance of sector or organization.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study

This has strong theoretical and practical importance and this importance is not limited to one sector. However some limitations also existed first, the limitation of this study is that it focuses primarily on the role of technology, organizational climate, and knowledge transfer without considering other potential factors that may influence employee performance, such as individual motivation, leadership styles, or external environmental pressures. Additionally, the study is context-specific to the Hail Health Cluster, limiting the

generalizability of the findings to other healthcare institutions or industries. The participants, being both medical and non-medical staff, may have different levels of technology adoption, and this model might not fully account for the varied needs and perspectives across these diverse groups. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the study may not capture the long-term effects of technology incorporation on employee performance. Finally, the study relies on self-reported data, which could introduce biases such as overestimation of technology use or performance outcomes.

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JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES (JSDS)
VOL. 14, NO. 4(2024), (ISSN 2221-1152)

From Screen to Society: Exploring Gender Dynamics in Moroccan Cinema

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Abstract: One of the most sophisticated, collaborative, and by far artistic expressions is cinema. It is a visual medium that is creatively employed to either expose or construct an alternative module of reality. In a country with high levels of illiteracy, cinema can have a grand impact on people who are denied access to print publications. For the last decades, mostly in fictive molds, Moroccan filmmakers have exquisitely produced a variety of significant movies that tackle the position of women in the country. Conscious of the pervasively tremendous influence of cinema, their productions effectively coordinate between the reflection of existing realities and the structure of new ones. This paper examines the construction of women's gender identity in Moroccan films. Given the profound influence that cinema has on the construction of people's perception of the world, it is employed in this research to study the interplay of gender power relations in Morocco. It endeavors to investigate the way Moroccan filmmakers build on reality to produce new gender roles. Based on an interdisciplinary study, that includes a thorough physical, political, religious, and social analysis of women's representation in Moroccan films, this paper focuses on four movies, namely *Number One, The Forgotten (المنسيون), Zineb Aghma's Flower (زينب وردة أغمات), and Her Husband (راجل المرا).* To some extent, these films provide an idea about the organization of gender roles in the country. It reveals that contemporary Moroccan films are gradually defying traditional notions of femininity and gender roles.

Keywords: *Women`s representation, gender power, identity, reality construction, gender roles.*

1. Introduction

Cinema, as an expressive and artistic medium, has the unique ability to reflect and construct new realities. In Morocco, where 26.3% of the population remains illiterate (World Bank, 2019), the influence of visual media is particularly powerful, providing access to narratives and societal commentary for those who may not engage with printed publications. Over the past few decades, Moroccan filmmakers have increasingly focused on the representation of women, using cinema as a tool to address societal issues and to challenge traditional perceptions of gender (Orlando, 2011).

The attention to women's roles in Moroccan cinema emerged after the country's independence. During the independence struggle, women gained recognition for their contributions, yet their societal status did not change overnight. Instead, the fight for gender equality truly began post-independence (Sadiqi, 2003). Educational reforms saw the enrollment of girls in schools increase significantly, and women's movements began to advocate for greater rights (Howe, 2005). Under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, who emphasized that societal progress was linked to women's status, substantial reforms were introduced, granting women rights in areas such as education, politics, and the legal sphere (Bordat & Kouzzi, 2010; Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). In parallel, Moroccan cinema transitioned from being a medium of entertainment to one that carries socio-cultural messages, addressing pressing issues such as gender inequality. Filmmakers seized the opportunity to deconstruct and reshape societal beliefs, particularly around gender identity and roles, using visual narratives to challenge established norms (Orlando, 2011).

Investigating the production of meaning in a film text requires the integration of various disciplines, including psychoanalysis, semiotics, sociology, and Marxism (Stam, 2000). These disciplines come together under the umbrella of feminist film theory to examine how cinematic techniques and narrative structures influence the representation of women. Feminist film theory aims to expose the unequal distribution of power in films, where men are typically positioned in dominant roles. It explores how films construct gendered viewing experiences by analyzing both male and female protagonists, as well as the spectators themselves. This three-dimensional analysis allows feminist film theorists to dissect women's representation in a male-dominated cinematic narrative, which often reflects a male perspective of women. However, feminist theorists also argue that feminist cinema has the potential to challenge and reconfigure existing representations of gender and sexual differences (Kaplan, 1983).

This study, drawing on feminist film theory, will examine how Moroccan filmmakers construct women's identities and depict power relations in both public and private spheres. Moreover, it will explore how these filmmakers build on collective Moroccan consciousness to either reinforce traditional values or create new gender roles that challenge societal expectations.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of women`s representation in Moroccan cinema

The portrayal of women in Moroccan cinema has long been shaped by the country's political history, cultural norms, and socio-economic transformations. Historically, Moroccan cinema, much like its global counterparts, has often reflected patriarchal ideologies, depicting women as submissive, domestic figures, confined to traditional gender roles. These early representations, influenced by colonial and post-colonial narratives, were predominantly crafted by male filmmakers, aligning with societal expectations of femininity (Dinia & Kenza, 2016). In many films, women were either victimized or reduced to mere decorative objects, echoing the broader stereotyping found across various media platforms (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

Initially, Moroccan films tended to reinforce the status quo, where women were largely depicted in passive roles, often as the property of men or the victims of societal constraints. As Kenza Oumlil points out, Moroccan television and films have historically underrepresented women, offering them limited opportunities to express complex identities (Oumlil, 2017). Instead, they were largely portrayed in secondary roles, underlining the enduring influence of a patriarchal society that kept them from stepping into the public sphere. Such depictions reflected broader societal expectations in Morocco, where women were relegated to submissive roles within a patrilineal system that Pierre Bourdieu critiques as being embedded into everyday activities (Bourdieu, 1999). A significant portion of early Moroccan cinema mirrored this unequal social landscape, focusing on men as aggressors and women as subjects of their gaze, with female characters often depicted as powerless and dependent on male characters for their identity and validation (Wood, 2013). This trope not only reflected social realities but also reinforced stereotypes that perpetuated women's marginalization in media and real life.

With the death of King Hassan II in 1999 and the ascension of Mohammed VI, Morocco began to experience significant socio-political reforms, including the introduction of the Moudawana, a reformed family code that granted women more rights, including the right to divorce (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2011). These reforms not only impacted the socio-political landscape of Morocco but also began to influence the cultural sector, including cinema. As filmmakers gained more freedom to explore pressing social issues, they started to challenge traditional portrayals of women. Moroccan cinema began reflecting these shifts, with filmmakers producing narratives that delved into the complexities of women's roles within Moroccan society. The increased focus on women's empowerment and their participation in the public sphere, combined with the reforms of the Moudawana, opened the door for more nuanced representations of women in films (Skalli, 2011).

An important development in the evolution of Moroccan cinema has been the emergence of female filmmakers who have challenged traditional gender roles. Female directors such as Farida Ben Lyazid, Yasmine Kassari, and Narjiss Nejjar have created films that depict women in powerful, autonomous roles, addressing themes like migration, rural struggles, and female solidarity. These directors, often trained abroad, brought with them a new perspective on gender roles and societal expectations. Their films, such as Kassari's *The Sleeping Child* and Nejjar's *The Dry Eyes*, have been celebrated for offering a more honest and complex representation of women, challenging the patriarchal narratives that had dominated the industry (Hillauer, 2005). This shift in representation is tied to the broader feminist movements in Morocco and across the Arab world. Women in Moroccan cinema began to be depicted not only as victims of oppression but as agents of change, engaging actively with the socio-political issues of the day. These films represent a clear break from the past, where women were silent figures; now, they are vocal and central to the narratives they inhabit.

Despite these positive changes, Moroccan cinema continues to grapple with challenges. Censorship and societal conservatism still exert a strong influence on filmmakers, especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as religion and female sexuality. Many filmmakers practice self-censorship, avoiding themes that might provoke a backlash from the state or conservative elements within society (Orlando, 2011). However, the rise of satellite television and streaming platforms has allowed for a more diverse range of films to reach audiences, including

those that push the boundaries of acceptable representation (Chahbane et al., 2021). The representation of women in contemporary Moroccan cinema has become increasingly varied, with films such as *Marock* exploring the tensions between modernity and tradition (Marrakchi, 2006). These films depict women not only as individuals struggling against societal constraints but also as active participants in the construction of their own identities. As *Number One* illustrates, cinema has become a space where the changing dynamics of gender roles in Morocco are negotiated, with humor often used to critique and subvert the dominant power structures (Tahiri, 2008).

Women's representation in Moroccan cinema has evolved significantly over the years, moving from traditional, submissive roles to more complex, empowered characters. This shift reflects broader socio-political changes in Morocco, particularly in the wake of the Moudawana reforms and the increasing participation of women in public life. However, while progress has been made, challenges remain, particularly in the face of censorship and conservative societal norms. The future of women's representation in Moroccan cinema will depend on the continued efforts of filmmakers—both male and female—to push the boundaries of what is considered acceptable, presenting women not only as subjects of oppression but as active agents of change (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006).

Moroccan feminism and its impact on Women`s representation in Moroccan films

Moroccan feminism has undergone significant transformations, shaped by the socio-political climate of the country, including landmark reforms such as the Moudawana, and Morocco's Family Code. The feminist movement has played a pivotal role in advocating for women's rights, which, in turn, has influenced the way women are portrayed in cinema.

The origins of Moroccan feminism date back to the 1940s, when Akhawat Al-Safaa (Sisters of Purity) became the first women's organization to demand the eradication of polygamy and increased involvement of women in the public sphere (Sadiqi, 2006). Early feminist efforts were largely supported by male political figures who sought to promote women as integral members of society rather than as individuals with distinct identities. This, however, led to a divergence in feminist views: while male activists saw feminism as a vehicle for social progress, women advocated for the movement as a means to directly address their specific issues (Sadiqi, 2006). The momentum of the feminist movement intensified in the 1980s, bolstered by the rise of feminist journalism and academic scholarship. These outlets began challenging traditional gender roles by highlighting how inequalities were culturally and socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Moroccan feminist scholars, such as Fatima Mernissi, were instrumental in this shift, calling for a more progressive interpretation of Islamic texts to address women's issues (Mernissi, 1991). Feminist activists in Morocco also leveraged international support, particularly from organizations like the United Nations, to further their cause (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006).

A significant breakthrough in Moroccan feminist activism came in 2004 with the reform of the Moudawana. King Mohammed VI, influenced by feminist organizations, introduced major reforms to the Family Code that expanded women's rights, including the right to divorce and the redefinition of gender roles within the family (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006). This reform represented a major shift in gender relations in Morocco and provided a legal framework that began to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms. However, the reception of the reformed Moudawana was mixed. In rural areas, the law was often misunderstood or not enforced, and male judges were sometimes reluctant to apply it, reflecting deep-seated anxieties about shifting gender norms (Boutouba, 2024).

This transformation of legal frameworks had a profound impact on cultural representations of women, particularly in cinema. For decades, women in Moroccan films were depicted primarily as submissive figures, confined to traditional roles within the home. They were often portrayed as passive characters who served as a backdrop to male narratives. This portrayal was consistent with broader societal norms that prioritized women's roles in the domestic sphere over public or political engagement (Boutouba, 2024). However, Moroccan filmmakers have increasingly begun to challenge these depictions by presenting women in more nuanced and empowering roles.

For example, Zakia Tahiri's film *Number One* uses comedy to critique patriarchal structures and offer a vision of evolving gender relations in contemporary Morocco (Tahiri, 2008). The film illustrates how men, particularly

those entrenched in traditional notions of masculinity, struggle to adjust to a society where women are becoming more empowered. It provides a comical yet insightful exploration of male anxieties in response to the increasing visibility of women in public life following the Moudawana reforms (Boutouba, 2024). Similarly, feminist filmmakers such as Farida Ben Lyazid have portrayed women's struggles and aspirations in ways that challenge the traditionally passive roles assigned to them in Moroccan cinema (Hillauer, 2005).

Despite these advances, the representation of Moroccan women in cinema still grapples with the tension between traditional and modern portrayals. While filmmakers like Tahiri and Lyazid have provided a platform for more progressive representations, women are often still depicted as victims of a patriarchal system, reflecting broader societal norms (Oumlil, 2017). This is particularly evident in films that portray women as objects of male desire or as characters whose narratives are limited to their relationships with men (Skalli, 2011). Such portrayals underscore the ongoing challenges that Moroccan feminism faces in reshaping cultural perceptions of women.

In conclusion, the evolution of Moroccan feminism has significantly influenced both the socio-legal standing of women and their representation in cinema. The reformed Moudawana and the efforts of feminist scholars and filmmakers have begun to shift the portrayal of women away from traditional, submissive roles toward more empowered and complex characters. However, the progress remains incomplete, and the ongoing struggle to fully integrate feminist ideals into Moroccan cinema reflects the broader socio-political challenges of achieving gender equality in Morocco.

The Theoretical Framework

In examining the representation of women in Moroccan cinema, this article employs a multi-faceted theoretical framework that draws on representation theory, feminist film theory, and postcolonial critiques of ideology and subalternity. The goal is to explore how Moroccan films construct gender identities and to assess the role of cinema in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender roles in Moroccan society. Specifically, the framework will utilize Stuart Hall's theories of representation, Judith Butler`s concept of gender performativity, Gayatri Spivak's notion of the subaltern, and Louis Althusser's theory of ideology to critically assess Moroccan films.

Representation Theory

Stuart Hall's theory of representation forms the backbone of this analysis, as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how meaning is constructed and communicated through cultural products such as films. According to Hall, representation is not merely the act of reflecting reality but rather a complex process through which meaning is produced and exchanged among members of a culture (1997, p. 15). Hall argues that representation functions as a medium through which language, signs, and images interact to convey meaning, and in turn, shape how we perceive the world. This process, according to Hall, is never neutral but deeply embedded in power relations that reflect and reproduce societal ideologies (Hall, 1997).

Central to Hall's theory is the distinction between *mental representation* and *language*. The former refers to internal conceptual maps that allow individuals to make sense of the world, while the latter involves the use of signs and symbols to communicate these internal maps to others (Hall, 1997). This framework is crucial for analyzing Moroccan films, as the representations of women in these films are not simply reflections of reality but are shaped by the cultural codes, societal values, and gender norms of Moroccan society. By applying Hall's theory, the analysis can uncover how films like *Number One* (2008) construct narratives that either challenge or reinforce traditional gender roles, particularly through the use of visual and linguistic signs that engage with Morocco's historical and social contexts. For instance, the visual portrayal of women's domestic labor in Moroccan cinema may appear to be a reflection of reality but, upon deeper analysis, reveals itself to be a cultural signifier of women's prescribed roles within patriarchal structures (Hall, 1997).

Hall also highlights the *constructionist approach* to representation, which suggests that meaning is constructed not by the world itself but by the systems of representation that give shape to cultural and social realities (Hall, 1997). In the context of Moroccan cinema, this approach enables the exploration of how filmmakers use signs—ranging from visual imagery to narrative techniques—to create meanings about gender and power. Moreover, Hall's framework emphasizes the role of the audience in the creation of meaning, as meaning is not fixed but

negotiated between the text (the film) and its viewers (Hall, 1997). This aspect is particularly relevant in the Moroccan context, where cultural and religious values deeply influence how representations of women are interpreted by different audiences.

Postcolonial Theory: Subalternity and Ideology

In addition to feminist film theory, postcolonial perspectives, particularly Gayatri Spivak's concept of the *subaltern* and Louis Althusser's theory of *ideology*, are essential for examining the representation of women in Moroccan cinema. Spivak's seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Addresses the issue of marginalized groups, particularly women, who are excluded from dominant discourses and thus denied a voice in shaping their representation (1988). In the context of Moroccan cinema, this framework can be applied to explore how women, particularly rural or lower-class women, are portrayed as voiceless or powerless within films that reflect Morocco's social hierarchies. These women, rendered subaltern, are often depicted as passive figures within patriarchal and nationalist discourses, reinforcing their exclusion from public life and their subjugation within the private sphere (Spivak, 1988).

Althusser's theory of *ideological state apparatuses* (ISAs) is also vital for understanding how Moroccan cinema operates as a cultural institution that perpetuates dominant ideologies (1971, p. 125) According to Althusser, ISAs such as media, education, and family work to reproduce the ideology of the ruling class by naturalizing social relations and making them appear inevitable (Althusser, 1970). In the context of Moroccan cinema, representations of women often reflect the ideologies of patriarchy, in which women's roles are confined to the domestic sphere, and their agency is limited by social and religious norms. This framework allows for a critical examination of how films serve as tools for reinforcing traditional gender roles and how women's subordination is constructed as natural and inevitable through cinematic techniques (Althusser, 1970).

By integrating Spivak's concept of the subaltern and Althusser's notion of ideology, the analysis can critically assess how Moroccan cinema not only represents women but also perpetuates broader societal structures of oppression. Films that portray women as passive figures, or that limit their roles to mothers and wives, are not merely reflecting reality but are actively participating in the reproduction of patriarchal ideologies that seek to maintain the status quo (Spivak, 1988; Althusser, 1970). However, when films challenge these portrayals by depicting women as active agents, they simultaneously challenge the ideological structures that seek to confine them.

Intersectionality and Gender Performance

Judith Butler's theory of *gender performativity* further enriches this framework by offering insights into how gender is not an inherent quality but is performed through repeated actions that conform to societal norms (1988, p. 519). In Moroccan films, the depiction of women as nurturing or subservient figures can be understood as a performance of femininity, shaped by cultural and social expectations. Butler's theory is particularly useful for analyzing moments in Moroccan cinema where these performances are disrupted, such as in films where women take on non-traditional roles or challenge patriarchal authority. These moments can be seen as acts of resistance against the normative gender scripts that Butler describes, offering a more complex and nuanced portrayal of women's identities in Moroccan society (Butler, 1988). Butler's concept of gender as performance also intersects with the postcolonial notion of the subaltern, as women who resist traditional gender roles are often marginalized or silenced within both societal and cinematic narratives. This framework allows for an exploration of how Moroccan films depict women's struggles to navigate these intersecting forces of gender, power, and representation, revealing the complex ways in which identity is negotiated in a rapidly changing society (Butler, 1988).

3. Methodology

Research questions

This study aims to explore the evolving representation of women in Moroccan cinema in light of social and legal transformations, specifically focusing on how Moroccan filmmakers depict gender roles and power dynamics. The following research questions guide the investigation:

- How do Moroccan films construct and portray the evolving identity of Moroccan women, particularly about traditional and modern gender roles?

- In what ways do Moroccan filmmakers use cultural narratives and societal norms to justify or challenge patriarchal structures?
- How do legal reforms, such as the Moudawana, impact gender dynamics and family structures as depicted in Moroccan cinema?

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

In this study, a qualitative thematic analysis was employed to explore and understand the socio-political issues reflected in Moroccan cinema, particularly regarding the representation of women and gender dynamics. This methodological approach is justified by the nature of the research, which seeks to delve into complex themes such as feelings, social constructs, and cultural attitudes. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued, "Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods" (cited in Creswell, 2012, p. 45).

The selection of qualitative analysis was appropriate due to the thematic nature of the research, focusing on the depiction of socio-political and cultural issues in Moroccan films rather than technical or aesthetic aspects. Additionally, the decision to use qualitative research instead of a mixed or quantitative methodology was made because of the subject matter's demand for a detailed comparison and analysis of the socio-political contexts portrayed in these films.

A case study strategy was also applied in this study. Despite potential critiques regarding the risk of bias in case study research, it was deemed suitable for this research's objectives, as it allows for in-depth exploration and understanding of the themes present in the chosen films.

Population Selection

For this study, a selection of four Moroccan films was chosen for analysis, representing different social, political, and cultural themes. Each film offers unique insights into the gender dynamics, societal structures, and challenges faced by women in Morocco. The films are listed below, including the year of production and their directors:

Table 1: The Selected Moroccan Films

Film Title	Year of Production	Director
Number One	2008	Zakia Tahiri
The Forgotten (المنسيون)	2010	Hassan Benjelloun
Zineb Aghmat's Flower (زينب وردة آغمات)	2020	Farida Bourquia
Her Husband (راجل المرا)	2020	Dani Youssef

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure that the films selected for analysis were relevant to the research objectives, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established.

Inclusion Criteria:

Relevance to Gender Dynamics and Patriarchy: Films must explicitly address issues related to the subordination of women, gender roles, or patriarchal structures.

Representation of Moroccan Society: Films should depict Moroccan society, either historically or in a contemporary setting, to provide relevant cultural and societal context.

Female Central Characters: The films must focus on female protagonists or central female characters whose personal stories reflect broader societal issues.

Set in Morocco: All films should be set in Morocco or directly relate to Moroccan society.

Produced After 2000: Films produced after 2000 were prioritized, as this period marks significant legal and societal changes, particularly regarding women's rights and the Moudawana reforms.

Exclusion Criteria:

Non-Moroccan Films: Films not produced or set in Morocco were excluded to maintain a focus on the socio-cultural dynamics specific to Morocco.

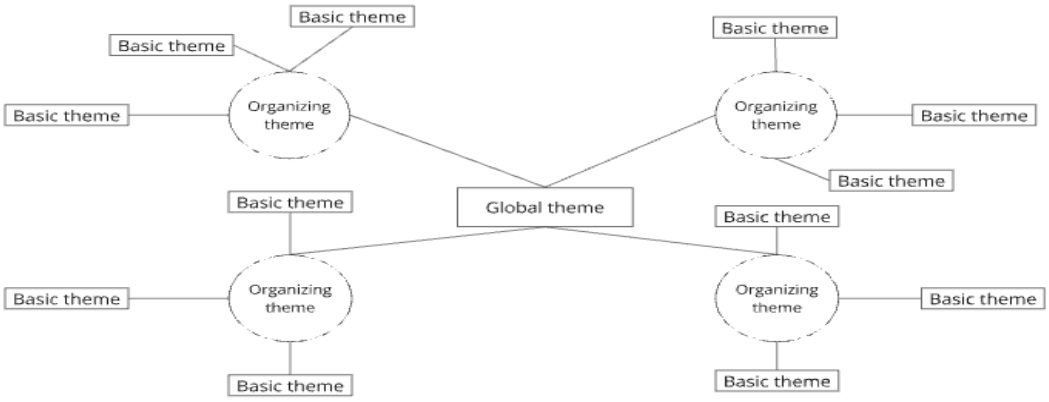
Films without Gender Focus: Films that do not engage with issues of gender, power dynamics, or patriarchy were excluded.
Pure Entertainment Films: Films that focus solely on fantasy, entertainment, or escapism without social critique were not included.
Superficial Representation of Women's Issues: Films that merely touch on gender issues without critically engaging with them were excluded from the analysis.

Thematic Analysis Approach
The thematic analysis followed the steps outlined by Clarke and Braun (2006), who argue that themes must capture something meaningful about the research question, highlighting unique patterns within the data. The methodology utilized a six-step thematic analysis process to identify and explore themes related to the depiction of women and patriarchal structures in Moroccan films.

Familiarization with Data: The selected films were viewed multiple times to ensure familiarity with their content. Each scene was examined closely to extract relevant socio-political and cultural themes. For accuracy, film scenes were compared with available scripts or synopses from reliable online sources.
Generating Initial Codes: After repeated viewings, initial codes were generated by identifying recurring motifs, character interactions, and symbolic elements that reflect broader gender and power dynamics. Keywords such as "patriarchy," "subordination," "empowerment," and "exploitation" were identified as dominant themes.
Searching for Themes: The initial codes were then grouped into broader themes. For example, the recurring depiction of domestic roles and male authority in *Number One* and *Her Husband* was grouped under the theme "Patriarchy and Gender Roles." The portrayal of women's resilience and subjugation in *The Forgotten* and *Zineb Aghmat's Flower* was classified under "Empowerment and Oppression."
Reviewing Themes: The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data. Themes that appeared inconsistently across films were either revised or discarded if they did not align with the research objectives. Additionally, a thematic map (similar to the one shown in the uploaded image) was constructed to visualize the relationship between global themes, organizing themes, and basic themes.
Defining and Naming Themes: The final themes were defined and named, capturing the essence of the film's portrayal of gender dynamics and societal power structures. Key themes identified include "Patriarchal Oppression," "Women's Resilience and Agency," and "The Societal Impact of Legal Reforms."
Producing the Report: The final step involved producing a detailed analysis of each theme, linking it back to the films' narratives and socio-political contexts. This analysis forms the basis of the discussion in this research, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the way Moroccan films reflect and critique societal structures related to gender and patriarchy.

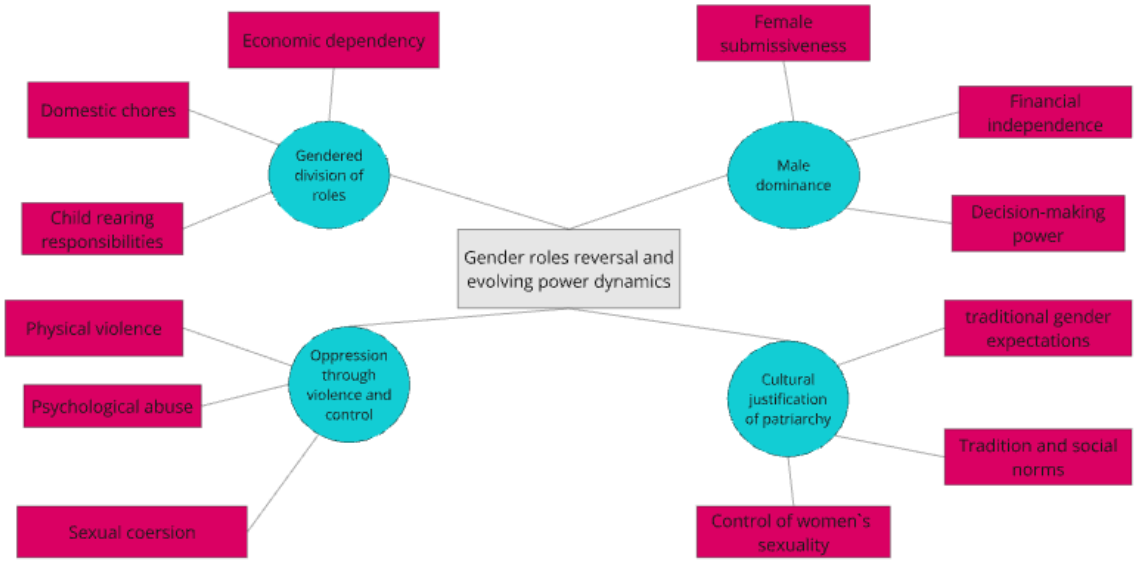
This thematic analysis highlights the rich complexity of gender and power dynamics in Moroccan films, offering insights into both the progress and limitations faced by women in Moroccan society. By following Clarke and Braun's rigorous approach, the study ensures a reliable and systematic analysis of the selected films.

Figure No. 1: Attride Sterling`s Model of Thematic Network Structure.



4. Findings

Figure No. 2: Thematic Network of Patriarchy and Oppression in Moroccan Cinema (Global theme in grey, main themes in blue, basic themes in pink)



The analysis of the selected Moroccan films—*Number One*, *The Forgotten*, and *Zineb Aghmat's Flower* reveals recurring themes of patriarchy and control that are vividly portrayed through male dominance, economic dependency, cultural justifications, and gendered labor. These films offer a compelling depiction of how patriarchal structures operate in Moroccan society to subjugate women and reinforce male authority.

In *Number One*, Aziz embodies patriarchal control over family resources, dismissing Suraya's request for money with 'You don't know how to take a shower at home?' (Tahiri, 2008). This trivialization of her request highlights how economic dependency is wielded as a tool of control. Furthermore, after a humiliating encounter with his female boss, Aziz publicly reasserts his authority, saying to Suraya, "You have gone crazy and out of your mind... I gave you the freedom to speak and you abused it... I will show you if I am a man or not" (Tahiri, 2008). Aziz's reaction to Suraya's independence during the dinner reflects the fragility of masculinity within patriarchal norms and his need to control her behavior to validate his status.

In *The Forgotten*, patriarchal control takes a darker form through the commodification and exploitation of women. Yamna's father, viewing her as a possession, arranges her marriage without her consent, stating, "I gave my word to someone to marry you," illustrating how women's autonomy is denied in a society that prioritizes familial and economic gains over personal agency (Benjelloun, 2010). When her virginity is questioned, Yamna's worth diminishes, exposing a patriarchal obsession with female purity. Her eventual exploitation in a trafficking network further underscores how societal norms commodify women's bodies, reducing them to objects of exchange and control.

In *Zineb Aghmat's Flower*, Zineb's intelligence and independence challenge traditional gender roles, leading male village leaders to accuse her of witchcraft and enforce her submission through a forced marriage. Comments like "This witch is a danger to all of us" and "She is going to cause us a lot of problems" (Bourquia, 2009) reflect societal mechanisms of control over women who defy expectations. Zineb's marriage is not merely an attempt to silence her voice but a way to assert control over her mind and body, reinforcing traditional norms.

Gendered labor further reinforces these dynamics, confining women to domestic roles and regulating their access to public life. In *Number One*, women are depicted engaging in domestic chores and discussing topics related to beauty and lifestyle on rooftops, illustrating their confinement to the private sphere. Suraya's reflection, "After the death of my father, my mum made me marry so young because we were poor and I was the eldest... I was dreaming of becoming a doctor or a lawyer and discovering Paris" (Tahiri, 2008), poignantly reveals how economic limitations force women into constrained roles. In *The Forgotten*, Yamna's economic vulnerability leads to her being traded within patriarchal structures, emphasizing how women's social and economic value is derived from their subservience to male authority.

Discussion

Patriarchy, as defined by Sylvia Walby, refers to "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p. 20). This definition encapsulates the power dynamics portrayed in the films, where male dominance is systematically exercised and culturally legitimized to maintain control over women. The Moudawana reforms of 2004, designed to improve women's rights, challenged this established structure by granting women greater autonomy. The reforms included increasing the minimum marriage age for women to 18, allowing women to initiate divorce, and granting women equal responsibilities within the family structure (Bordat & Kouzzi, 2010). However, these legal advancements encountered significant cultural resistance, especially in more conservative regions where many saw the reforms as an attack on traditional values. This resistance exemplifies how deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and beliefs are in Moroccan society.

Aziz's behavior aligns with Hall's theory that cultural representations do more than reflect reality; they actively reinforce societal norms (Hall, 1997). His dismissal of Suraya's basic needs reflects how cultural narratives justify male authority. When Suraya requests money to visit the public bathhouse (hammam), Aziz dismissively responds, "You don't know how to take a shower at home?" trivializing her needs and asserting his control over financial resources (Tahiri, 2008). His sarcastic reaction highlights how economic dependency reinforces patriarchal authority, effectively denying women's autonomy over even basic needs. Aziz's power over Suraya is further exemplified after a dinner with his feminist boss, where he erupts, "You have gone crazy and out of your mind, you ruined my reputation... I gave you the freedom to speak, and you abused it... I will show you if I am a man or not" (Tahiri, 2008). This outburst underscores the fragility of his masculinity and the pressure on men to assert dominance to maintain societal expectations of male authority.

Similarly, in *The Forgotten*, male dominance is depicted through the character of Yamna's father, who treats his daughter as a possession to be exchanged for social and economic gain. His decision to marry Yamna off without her consent, saying, "I gave my word to someone to marry you," reveals how patriarchal norms commodify women within familial and social structures (Benjelloun, 2010). This control over Yamna's life reflects Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern, where marginalized individuals, particularly women, are silenced and deprived of agency (Spivak, 1988). In a society where women's value is tied to marriageability, their autonomy is systematically suppressed, reinforcing Spivak's assertion that "the subaltern cannot speak" within oppressive patriarchal frameworks (1988). Benjelloun`s film is also a reflection on Morocco's anti-trafficking laws, which

at the time, lacked comprehensive measures to protect trafficking victims and combat exploitation effectively. In this film, Yamna's trafficking and subsequent sexual exploitation underscore the societal disregard for women's autonomy and highlight the gaps in legal protection for vulnerable women. These gaps are also reflected in the continued commodification of women's bodies, as Yamna's fate illustrates the dehumanizing nature of trafficking, where patriarchal and economic forces intersect to reduce women to mere assets (Benjelloun, 2010).

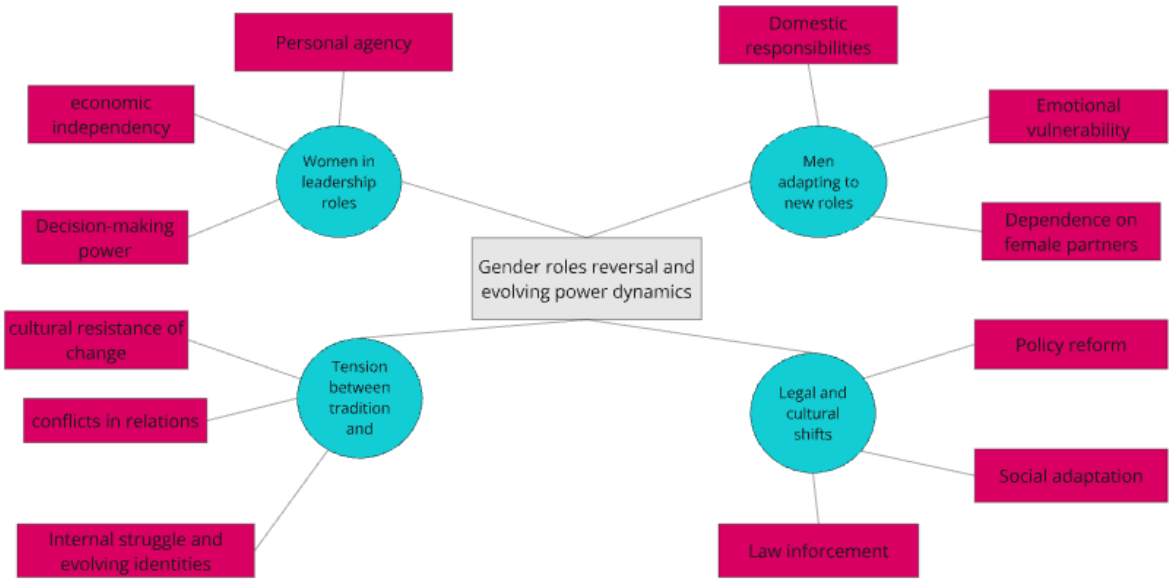
Recent reports by the U.S. Department of State place Morocco on Tier 2 in the Trafficking in Persons Report, indicating that while the government has made significant efforts to combat trafficking, it still falls short in key areas. Challenges include a lack of specialized shelters for trafficking victims, insufficient victim identification procedures, and inadequate support for civil society organizations providing essential services (U.S. Department of State, 2023). However, the Moroccan government has made strides in recent years, including the approval of a comprehensive victim identification guide, a National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and a 2023-2030 anti-trafficking strategy. These initiatives signal Morocco's commitment to addressing trafficking but underscore the ongoing struggle to implement effective protections within a framework that continues to wrestle with patriarchal norms(U.S. Department of State, 2023).

In *Zineb Aghmat's Flower*, Zineb's intelligence and independence become sources of fear for the male village leaders, who ultimately force her into marriage to control her autonomy. The villagers' accusations of witchcraft highlight the threat that empowered women pose to patriarchal systems, leading to the community's effort to restrain her. As one village chief remarks, "This witch is a danger to all of us," while another insists, "She is going to cause us a lot of problems" (Bourquia, 2009). This reaction underscores how patriarchal societies employ cultural narratives to suppress women who challenge traditional gender roles, a concept Althusser explains as "interpellation," where individuals are "hailed" into specific social roles, such as the obedient wife (Freccero, 1999, p. 160).

The films further underscore how traditional gender roles are maintained through economic dependency and gendered labor. In *Number One*, Suraya is confined to domestic work, joining other women on rooftops to wash clothes and discuss beauty and lifestyle topics—activities reinforcing her relegation to the private sphere. According to Butler's theory of *gender performativity*, Suraya's engagement in domestic tasks and conversations on appearance are not passive reflections of her identity but are part of a continuous "performance" of femininity, shaped by societal expectations that dictate how women should act and occupy space (Butler, 1988, 519). Her recollections of her lost dreams, "I was dreaming of becoming a doctor or a lawyer and discovering Paris," symbolize the dreams denied to Moroccan women due to socio-economic constraints (Tahiri, 2008). This economic dependency aligns with Spivak's notion of the subaltern, where the voices and aspirations of marginalized groups, especially women, are subordinated to economic and cultural limitations (Spivak, 1988). In *The Forgotten*, Yamna's economic vulnerability becomes a tool for patriarchal control, as her family seeks to arrange her marriage to secure financial benefits. Her reduced value upon losing her virginity illustrates how patriarchal society commodifies women, with their worth intrinsically tied to their sexuality. This cultural emphasis on virginity aligns with Hall's concept of representation, as it constructs women's identities through a lens of purity and honor, reflecting societal expectations that limit female autonomy (Hall, 1997).

Through these narratives, the selected films critique the pervasive influence of patriarchy in Moroccan society, highlighting both the systemic oppression women face and the significant challenges posed by reforms like the Moudawana. Despite legislative efforts to empower women, these cinematic portrayals reveal how cultural resistance continues to uphold traditional power structures.

Figure No. 3: Thematic Network of Gender Roles Reversal and Evolving Power Dynamics (Global theme in grey, main themes in blue, basic themes in pink)



The analysis of the films reveals significant themes related to shifting gender roles and power dynamics in Moroccan society, particularly in the context of evolving cultural expectations and legal reforms. The selected films ("Number One," "Zineb Aghmat's Flower," and "Her Husband") offer a nuanced depiction of the changing roles of men and women, highlighting tensions between tradition and modernity, and reflecting on the socio-political context that influences these dynamics. Key themes emerging from the analysis include gender role reversal, cultural resistance, and the internal struggle experienced by men in response to these societal changes.

The films provide multiple examples of the reversal of traditional gender roles and the impact on social and familial structures. In *Number One,* Aziz's transformation from a controlling husband to a supportive partner illustrates this shift (Tahiri, 2008). Initially, Aziz embodies traditional masculinity, exerting control over his wife Suraya by restricting her financial freedom and social activities. For instance, he belittles her request for money to visit the hammam, sarcastically remarking, "You don't know how to take a shower at home?" (Tahiri, 2008). However, as the story progresses, Aziz begins to share domestic responsibilities. He even opens a bank account for Suraya, designating half of his salary to her each month in recognition of her contributions at home. This shift challenges traditional expectations and reflects broader changes in gender roles brought about by legal reforms, such as the Moudawana.

In *Zineb Aghmat's Flower,* Zineb defies traditional gender expectations by taking on leadership roles within her community (Bourquia, 2009). When her husband abandons the estate in fear of an attack, Zineb takes command, demonstrating her capability to manage not only domestic affairs but also political and economic matters. Her bold stance when Youssef Ibn Tachfine and his ally approach the town—"This city needs rulers who reign with justice and honesty"—shows her insistence on fair governance, reinforcing the idea that women can be effective leaders even in male-dominated contexts (Bourquia, 2009).

Similarly, *Her Husband* explores the implications of role reversals in contemporary Moroccan society (Youssef, 2020). The film depicts the husband's struggles after losing his job, while his wife remains the primary breadwinner. His internal conflict and shame manifest when he says, "When the world knows that I do not have a job, what would they say? He is the wife's husband." This reversal of roles disrupts traditional gender norms, challenging the protagonist's sense of identity. The film further explores the fragility of these new roles, as the wife resists his request to reduce her working hours, emphasizing her commitment to her career: "You cannot

ask me in one night to leave my job, are you crazy or what?" (Youssef, 2020). This struggle reflects the tension between maintaining traditional gender expectations and adapting to new socio-economic realities.

The films also highlight the cultural resistance to evolving gender norms, showing how Moroccan society struggles to reconcile modernity with deeply rooted traditions. In *Number One,* resistance to change is evident in the reaction of Aziz's boss, who disapproves of the celebratory atmosphere with female employees, ultimately firing him for failing to conform to expected norms (Tahiri, 2008). The scene where a neighbor disdainfully reacts to Suraya's modern attire further illustrates the discomfort of women stepping outside traditional roles. Such cultural resistance underscores the slow pace of change despite legal reforms. The experience of Zineb in *Zineb Aghmat's Flower* also reflects this tension, as the villagers initially perceive her as a threat due to her intelligence and leadership abilities (Bourquia, 2009). Accusations of witchcraft directed at Zineb serve as a cultural mechanism to suppress her influence, reinforcing the idea that women who defy traditional roles are often marginalized or demonized. This aligns with Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses, where cultural beliefs and social norms work to maintain the existing power structures by enforcing specific gender roles (Althusser, 1971).

The internal struggles that men experience due to shifting gender dynamics are evident across the films, revealing the emotional and psychological impact of these changes. In *Number One*, Aziz's transformation is accompanied by confusion and anxiety about his altered identity. His visit to the doctor, where he expresses concern about not feeling "normal" and fears becoming "homosexual" due to his newfound empathy toward women, illustrates the deep-seated cultural anxieties surrounding masculinity (Tahiri, 2008). Similarly, in *Her Husband*, the male protagonist's depression following his job loss and the resulting role reversal highlights the difficulties men face when adapting to non-traditional roles. The wife's parents reinforce this by remarking that the husband has become "the female" in the relationship, reflecting the cultural stigmatization associated with role reversals (Youssef, 2020).

Discussion

The Moudawana (or Moroccan Family Code) has significantly impacted the legal and social rights of women in Morocco, marking a shift toward gender equality. The first major reform in 2004 represented a pivotal moment, granting Moroccan women unprecedented legal rights, including raising the minimum marriage age to 18, enabling women to self-guard in marriage, allowing women to initiate divorce, and promoting equal responsibilities within the family structure (Bordat & Kouzzi, 2010). However, these changes initially encountered cultural resistance, particularly in rural and conservative areas where traditional patriarchal values remained strong. For many Moroccans, these reforms disrupted the established family hierarchy and seemed to undermine male authority, thus sparking fears about family unity (Salime, 2011).

This tension is well illustrated in Moroccan cinema, where films serve as cultural texts that both reflect and critique societal norms. Drawing on Stuart Hall's theory of representation, which posits that cultural products do more than reflect reality but actively participate in constructing social meanings (Hall, 1997), the film *Number One* highlights the initial challenges faced by men like Aziz in adapting to evolving gender norms (Tahiri, 2008). Aziz's journey—from controlling his wife Suraya's finances to eventually supporting her autonomy—reflects the gradual internalization of the new legal expectations following the 2004 reforms. His resistance to these changes underscores Hall's notion of how representation can challenge and reframe dominant ideologies, as Aziz's transformation symbolizes the destabilization of traditional male authority in the family structure.

The film *Her Husband* exemplifies the further societal progress in gender roles, demonstrating how women's increasing participation in the workforce and financial spheres has become more normalized. This development aligns with Louis Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses, which suggests that institutions like the family, education, and legal structures serve to perpetuate dominant ideologies, including patriarchy (Althusser, 1971). In this context, the Moudawana reforms act as a reconfiguration of these ideological apparatuses, encouraging new narratives around gender equality. *Her Husband* depicts a woman as the primary earner and decision-maker in the household, placing her husband in a traditionally "feminine" role of managing domestic responsibilities. This shift represents the broader impact of the Moudawana on gender identities, as well as the internal struggle some men face in reconciling these changing roles, thus illustrating

the cultural friction between modernity and traditional values (Althusser, 1971; Bordat & Kouzzi, 2010; Salime, 2011).

In 2023, additional reforms to the Moudawana were proposed, addressing areas such as inheritance equality, stricter restrictions on child marriage, enhanced protections against domestic violence, and further refinements in divorce and child custody laws (Maghreb Arab Press, 2023). These proposed changes aim to address ongoing societal and legal challenges, pushing Morocco closer to gender equality by reinforcing the advancements initiated in 2004. However, this progression remains controversial, as the reforms continue to challenge deeply ingrained social norms and religious interpretations. Should these reforms be implemented, they would not only elevate the status of women but also reconfigure traditional family dynamics, marking another significant step in Morocco's evolving legal and cultural landscape toward gender equality (Bordat & Kouzzi, 2010).

The internal struggle of men depicted in the films further illustrates the psychological and cultural impact of shifting gender roles, contextualized through Stuart Hall's representation theory. Hall posits that cultural products don't merely mirror reality; rather, they construct and transmit meanings that influence societal perceptions (Hall, 1997). The evolving depiction of masculinity in Moroccan cinema exemplifies this constructivist approach, as films like *Her Husband* do more than represent men's anxieties about changing gender roles—they actively shape and reinforce viewers' understandings of masculinity. The male protagonist's struggle and sense of emasculation, particularly after a job loss, serve as a cultural narrative that interrogates Morocco's shifting gender expectations. By foregrounding his depression and his fear of being viewed as merely "the wife's husband," the film challenges traditional perceptions of masculinity while also acknowledging the cultural weight of male authority in Moroccan society (Hall, 1997).

Althusser's concept of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) provides another layer of insight into these dynamics. According to Althusser, institutions like the family, media, and religious organizations perpetuate dominant ideologies that maintain societal structures (Althusser, 1971). In Moroccan society, these ISAs uphold patriarchal values that reinforce male authority and economic provision as markers of masculinity. The protagonist's crisis in *Her Husband* stems not only from his loss of income but also from a perceived deviation from the culturally inscribed masculine ideal as reinforced by these ISAs. The film, through its narrative, thus critiques the unyielding expectations imposed on men by a patriarchal society, revealing how deeply embedded these ideals are in cultural consciousness and social institutions.

Spivak's subaltern concept also offers an interpretative framework, especially regarding how women's advancement inadvertently challenges male identity within a patriarchal structure. Spivak argues that subaltern voices—those marginalized or silenced within dominant discourses—struggle to assert agency within oppressive systems (Spivak, 1988). As Moroccan women gain more agency and access to public and economic spaces, the male protagonist in *Her Husband* embodies the patriarchal structure's resistance to this shift. His discomfort and depression reflect not merely personal insecurity but a structural discomfort within a society where male identity is traditionally linked to dominance and provision. This struggle symbolizes the broader societal resistance to female empowerment and the implicit threats it poses to entrenched gender norms.

In conclusion, the films present a layered exploration of evolving gender roles in Moroccan society, highlighting the complexities of legal and cultural change. The Moudawana reforms signify progress, yet cultural resistance and the persistence of patriarchal norms pose significant challenges to achieving gender equality. The theoretical insights of Hall, Spivak, Butler, and Althusser offer a comprehensive understanding of how cultural narratives, power structures, and legal frameworks intersect to shape the lived experiences of men and women. The cinematic representations underscore the ongoing struggle for women's rights and the need for continued efforts to dismantle deeply entrenched patriarchal values.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, *From Screen to Society: Exploring Gender Dynamics in Moroccan Cinema* provides a comprehensive analysis of how Moroccan filmmakers navigate the complex interplay of gender, power, and

societal norms in their cinematic representations of women. Through an in-depth study of selected films—*Number One*, *The Forgotten*, *Zineb Aghmat's Flower*, and *Her Husband*—this paper illustrates how Moroccan cinema has evolved from reinforcing traditional gender roles to challenging and, at times, deconstructing patriarchal structures. The theoretical frameworks applied, including Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Althusser's ideological state apparatus, and Spivak's subalternity, offer critical insights into how films actively shape cultural narratives around gender.

The analysis highlights two central themes: patriarchy and oppression and gender role reversal and evolving power dynamics. Through these lenses, it becomes evident that Moroccan filmmakers not only portray the societal challenges women face but also depict shifting roles for men, who struggle with reconciling traditional expectations with emerging realities. Legal reforms, particularly the Moudawana, have played a significant role in reshaping gender norms, allowing cinema to reflect and critique these changes. However, as seen in the films, cultural resistance to gender equality remains strong, rooted in deep-seated patriarchal and religious values. This resistance underscores the societal tension that Moroccan filmmakers bring to the screen, portraying both the progress and setbacks on the path toward gender equity.

The films analyzed do more than mirror societal values; they construct new narratives around gender, challenge the limitations imposed by traditional ideologies, and advocate for a re-imagining of Moroccan womanhood. Yet, the ongoing struggle for gender equality in Moroccan society is palpable, and these films serve as cultural texts that both reflect and critique Morocco's socio-legal landscape. As Moroccan cinema continues to evolve, it has the potential to play a transformative role in fostering new understandings of gender roles, ultimately contributing to a more equitable society.

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JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES (JSDS)
VOL. 14, NO. 4(2024), (ISSN 2221-1152)

Impact of Work Distributive Justices on Patient's Satisfaction: Mediating Roles of Nurses' Work Performance

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Abstract: In any organization justice in work distribution is crucial. This justice in the work distribution increases the confidence of the workers and provides equality among other worker. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between work distribution justice and patient satisfaction in the context of the Hail health cluster. Further, to examine the role of work performance as a mediator. The study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a sample of 327 nurses working within the Hail Health Cluster. Data was collected through structured questionnaires from May to July 2024, after the data analysis SEM-PLS was used to extract the results. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and patient satisfaction, with nurses' performance acting as a vital mediator. Results indicate that equitable distribution of workloads, recognition, and resources among nursing staff not only enhances their performance but also leads to improved patient satisfaction levels. The mediating effect of nurses' work performance underscores the importance of distributive justice as a fundamental factor in healthcare management that enhances patient care outcomes. This research highlights the need for healthcare administrators to implement fair and transparent policies regarding workload distribution to foster an environment that supports high-quality nursing performance, ultimately benefiting patient care and satisfaction.

Keywords: *Work distributive justice, patient satisfaction, employee performance, Hail health cluster*

1. Introduction

In today's healthcare system patient satisfaction has emerged as a critical measure of quality and success. Among various factors influencing patient satisfaction, the role of work distributive justice fairness in workload distribution and resources among healthcare staff holds considerable importance. When healthcare organizations ensure that resources, responsibilities, and rewards are distributed equitably among staff, it positively impacts job satisfaction, motivation, and overall performance, especially among nurses, who are at the forefront of patient care. In high-stress healthcare environments (Hussain, 2024; Hussain et al., 2022; Junior et al., 2021), the risk of burnout and job turnover is significant. By avoiding irregular capabilities distributive justice can help moderate it which usually leads to a trite, stressed team. Healthcare sector services can decrease stress rates, recollect skilled specialists, or retain the stability of care by ensuring that no individual staff team members or sector is overawed, all of them are important for patient satisfaction and care (Hodkinson et al., 2022).

Moreover, in the Hail Health Cluster, came to know the effect of work-distributive justice on patient happiness takes on a specific importance. This constituency, the healthcare sector requires allocation of resources, gives and superlative setting to discover better capability circulation between nurses can intervene in patient consequences (Van den Oetelaar et al., 2021). Nurses as crucial caretakers play an important role in defining the worth of patient collaboration, the effectiveness of fair distribution, and finally patient relaxation. Therefore, investigating if distributive justice affects their capability can give an important vision into getting advanced patient care levels (Hussain et al., 2022).

Thus, this research seeks the connect this knowledge gap by discovering the mediating role of the work performance of nurses in the relationship between distributive justice and patient care in the Hail Health Cluster (Aloufi, 2023). The findings aim to offer healthcare administrators and policymakers actionable insights into the significance of equitable resource allocation, aiming for improved patient care and satisfaction across healthcare systems as well as facilitating the nurses with training and skill development (Duffy, 2022).

2. Literature Review

This section of the article is developed in the review of previous studies. In this study work distributive justice is the independent variable and patient satisfaction is the dependent variable, whereas nurses' work performance is the mediator between the WDJ and PS as well as training and skill development is the moderator between this variable. All the variables are explained one by one:-

Work Distributive justice

Work distributive justice refers to the fair and equitable allocation of responsibilities, rewards, and resources among employees within an organization (Yang et al., 2021). In healthcare, this concept is crucial because it ensures that no single staff member is overburdened, which can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. Fair distribution fosters a positive work environment, encouraging teamwork, morale, and motivation among healthcare professionals. When staff members perceive fairness in workload distribution, they are more likely to be committed, cooperative, and focused on delivering quality patient care (Pradhan Shah et al., 2024). Thus, work distributive justice serves as a foundational element for maintaining both workforce well-being and patient-centered service quality (Anderson, 2021).

Work performance

Work performance in healthcare encompasses the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality with which healthcare professionals execute their duties and responsibilities. For nurses and other frontline staff, high work performance means adhering to care standards, following protocols, and providing compassionate and timely patient care (Gkliati & Saiti, 2022). Performance is influenced by multiple factors, including workload, resources, training, and the support available within the healthcare system. When staff performance is optimized, patients receive better care, experience shorter wait times, and report higher satisfaction (Hung et al., 2021). Therefore, enhancing work performance through fair practices and adequate resources directly benefits both patients and the healthcare facility's overall reputation (Mohammad et al., 2021).

Patients satisfaction

Patient satisfaction is a critical measure of the quality and effectiveness of any organization. In healthcare, the satisfaction of patients reflects the patients' overall experience and perceived value of care received (Ampaw et al., 2020). Factors influencing patient satisfaction include the timeliness of care, staff empathy, communication clarity, and facility organization. In healthcare settings, satisfied patients are more likely to trust their providers, adhere to treatment plans, and experience improved health outcomes (Drossman & Ruddy, 2020). Patient satisfaction also impacts the institution's reputation and financial success, as satisfied patients are more likely to return for future care and recommend the facility to others. Thus, patient satisfaction serves as both a direct and indirect indicator of a healthcare organization's performance and patient-centered approach (Wang et al., 2023).

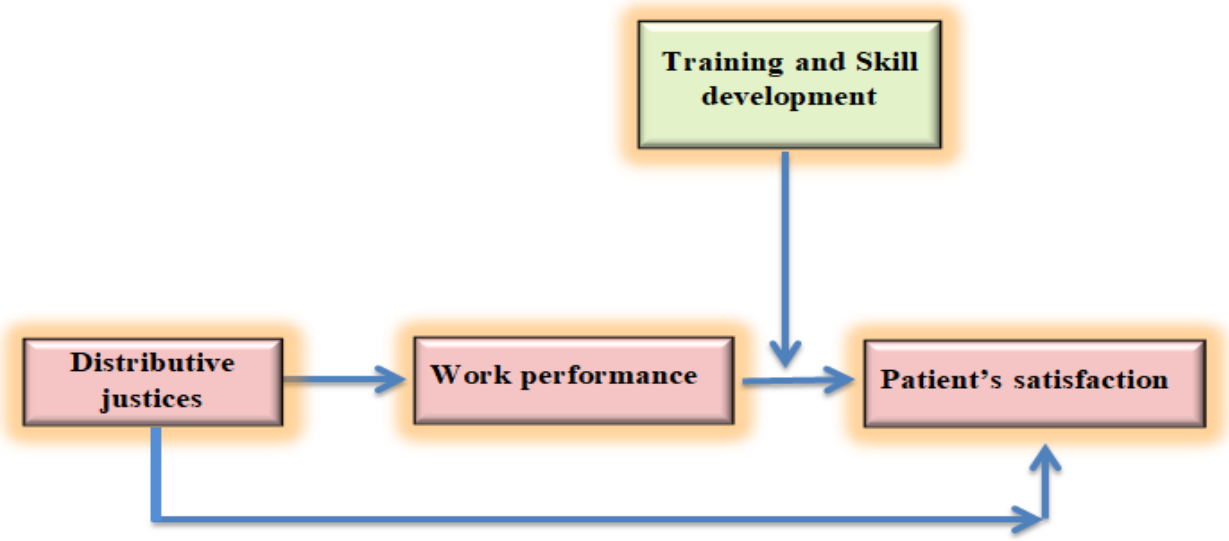
Training and skill development

Training and skill development are essential for healthcare staff to maintain competence, adapt to new technologies, and provide high-quality patient care (Ngenzi et al., 2021). Continuous professional development ensures that healthcare providers are well-prepared to handle evolving medical practices, advanced equipment, and patient care challenges. For nurses and other frontline staff, ongoing training helps to improve technical skills, patient interaction capabilities, and crisis management. (V Babu et al., 2021). Effective training programs not only enhance individual performance but also contribute to team cohesion, reduce errors, and improve patient outcomes. Therefore, investing in training and skill development is integral to building a knowledgeable, confident, and adaptable healthcare workforce that can meet patient needs effectively (Hodkinson et al., 2022) .

Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

The hypothesis for this study is developed based on a literature review of the previous study and the current study fills the gap created by the previous study with the help of the following diagram. This section of the study explains the relationship among the variables and develops hypotheses.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Developed by author

Work-Distributive Justice and Patient Satisfaction

Work distributive justice plays a significant role in shaping patient satisfaction, particularly in healthcare settings where fair treatment of staff directly impacts the quality of patient care. (Liu et al., 2021). When workloads and resources are distributed equitably, healthcare staff, especially nurses, experience reduced stress and increased job satisfaction, allowing them to dedicate more attention and empathy to patients. This positive work environment encourages staff commitment and engagement, ultimately enhancing the patient experience (Ogbonnaya & Babalola, 2021). Therefore, work-distributive justice not only improves staff morale but also contributes to patients' perception of quality care, directly impacting their satisfaction levels. (Ahmad et al., 2022). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H1: *There is a positive relationship between Work Distributive justice and Patient's satisfaction*

Work Distributive justice and nurses' work performance

The fair distribution of tasks and responsibilities among nurses is a key factor in boosting their work performance. (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021). When nurses feel that their workload is manageable and resources are allocated equitably, they are more likely to stay motivated, maintain high standards of care, and demonstrate a proactive approach to patient care. Moreover, equitable distribution reduces the likelihood of fatigue and burnout, which often hinder work performance. (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). This sense of fairness in workload not only supports the individual nurse's performance but also improves team dynamics, which is essential in delivering cohesive, efficient patient care. (Ellis, 2021). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H2: *There is a positive relationship between Work Distributive justice and nurses work performance*

Work Performance and Patient Satisfaction

There is a strong link between healthcare work performance and patient satisfaction. When nurses and other staff perform their duties effectively, patients benefit from timely, compassionate, and thorough care, which positively impacts their perception of the healthcare experience. (Malenfant et al., 2022). High work performance among healthcare providers means they can better meet patient needs, answer questions, and respond to concerns, leading to higher patient trust and confidence in the care they receive. Consequently, improved work performance is a critical driver of patient satisfaction, as it contributes directly to a positive and reassuring patient experience. (Locock et al., 2020). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H3: *There is a positive relationship between nurses work performance and Patient's satisfaction*

Work performance as a mediator

Nurses' work performance serves as a positive mediator between work-distributive justice and patient satisfaction, meaning that fair workload distribution enhances nurse performance, which in turn improves patient satisfaction. (Hashish, 2020). When distributive justice is present, nurses feel valued and supported, leading to better focus, attentiveness, and care quality. This enhanced performance naturally results in higher patient satisfaction, as patients receive the benefits of a well-supported nursing staff. (Hannah, 2023). Therefore, nurses' work performance is a vital link that enables the positive effects of work-distributive justice to translate into improved patient experiences and outcomes. (Hashish, 2020). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H4: *Nurse's work performance positively mediates the relationship between Work Distributive justice and Patient Satisfaction*

Training and skill development moderate

Training and skill development act as a moderator in the relationship between nurses' work performance and patient satisfaction (Jankelová & Joniaková, 2021). Well-trained nurses with up-to-date skills are more adept at handling patient needs, managing complex cases, and using advanced technology, all of which contribute to higher patient satisfaction. When healthcare organizations invest in continuous training, it amplifies the effect of strong work performance by equipping nurses with the skills needed to provide efficient and compassionate care. (Giordano et al., 2024). In this way, training and development enhance nurses' ability to deliver quality care, reinforcing the positive impact of their performance on patient satisfaction (King et al., 2021). Based on the above discussion following hypothesis can be developed as

H5: *Training and skill development moderate the relationship between nurses work performance and Patient's satisfaction*

3. Methodology

In the study, the main respondents are staff nurses working in a public hospital in the Hail health cluster in Saudi Arabia. The public hospital has the largest number of nurses. A simple random sampling method is used to select the data. The researcher excluded the nurses who were on leave during this period of data collection and also excluded the nurses who did not have direct patient care and medical students. The unique number who exceeded the criteria was 2171. The researcher selected the sample size of 327 nurses at a 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval by the Lynch formula. This study is a cross-section and data is collected with the help of a questionnaire. Before the data collection, the administration of the hospital was informed about the aim of the study. The questionnaire was distributed by hand and face-to-face. There were 317 questionnaires used for the data analysis after scanning. So the response rate was favorable for the data analysis. The following table explains the demographic characteristics of respondents.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Demographic variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40%
	Female	60%
Age group	Less than 25	19%
	26- 35	35%
	36-45	28%
	45 above	18%
Position	Register Nurses	50%
	Advanced Practice Nurses	30%
	Medical Surgical Nurses	20%
Years of experience	Less than year	8%
	1-5 years	27%
	6-7 years	18%
	6-10 years	22%
	More than 10	25%

Measurement scales of variable

In this study the work distributive is the independent variable, it is measured with 5 items. The patient's satisfaction is the independent variable and it is measured with 5 items developed by (Panteloukas et al., 2012; Tarjo, 2020). Further, the work task performance of the workers is a mediator and it is measured with 7 items. The training and skill development is the moderator and it is measured with five items developed by (Elneel & Almulhim, 2024; Hayat., 2024). All the variables are measured ad fiver Likert-scale.

Data analysis techniques

For the analysis of data, the current study used SmartPls and applied SEM test. First of all, a measurement model was conducted for extracting the values of Cronbach alpha values (CA), composite reliability (CR) average variance extracted (AVE), and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Furthermore, the theoretical model was investigated by analyzing the discriminant validity (DV) and correlation. Moreover, common method bias was used, such as "variance inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R2), effect size (F2), and predictive relevance (Q2).

4. Findings

Assessment of Measurement Model

The measurement model explains Cronbach's alpha values, The Composite Reliability (CR) values, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Further factor loading of the variables is also estimated there.

Table 2: Factor loading, CA, CR, and AVE values

Variable	Code	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Work distributive justices	WD1	0.76	0.73	0.85	0.63
	WD 2	0.80			
	WD 3	0.77			
	WD 4	0.84			
	WD 5	0.81			
Patient's satisfaction	PS 1	0.78	0.78	0.81	0.66
	PS 2	0.82			
	PS 3	0.86			
	PS 4	0.71			
	PS 5	0.85			
Training and skill development	TSD 1	0.78	0.84	0.91	0.67
	TSD 2	0.83			
	TSD 3	0.88			
	TSD 4	0.84			
	TSD 5	0.79			
Work task performance	WTP 1	0.74	0.86	0.83	0.72
	WTP 2	0.79			
	WTP 3	0.76			
	WTP 4	0.80			
	WTP 5	0.83			
	WTP 6	0.87			
	WTP 7	0.84			

This table explains that there are factor loading of four variables. This table explains the CA, CR, and AVE values. The result indicates that all the CA values are more than 0.60 and CR also meets the threshold level which explains the reliability of the data. Further, the AVE value is also more than 0.50. Overall, the result of this study provides significant results

Table 3: Discriminant validity (Fornell and Lacker Criterion)

Construct	WD	PS	TSD	WTP
WD	0.84			
PS	0.52	0.78		
TSD	0.42	0.51	0.81	
WTP	0.41	0.48	0.46	0.80

Table 4 presents the discriminant validity of the constructs in the study, evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Overall, all exhibit good discriminant validity as their AVE square root (0.77) exceeds its correlations with the other constructs

Assessment of Structural Model

The assessment of the structural model explains the acceptance and rejection of the hypothesis based on the p-value. This model also provides the results of path coefficients and discussion about the results. The table explains the Hypothesis testing

Table 6: Results of Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta value	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	WD->PS	1.27	3.10	0.005	Accepted
H2	WD->WP	3.21	2.94	0.005	Accepted
H3	WP->PS	0.63	4.67	0.010	Accepted
H4	WD->WP->PS	0.58	5.04	0.002	Accepted
H5	TSD*OC->KT	1.67	3.28	0.000	Accepted

This table describes the consequences of hypothesis testing, showing the link between variables with the use of coefficient values, testing values, and probability values. Every hypothesis is based on the probability value threshold of 0.05, indicating statistical importance if the probability value is below this level. Below is a complete explanation of each hypothesis.

Thus, each hypothesis is statistically important with probability values below 0.05, associated with each planned link. These results show the significance of work distributive justice, work performance, training, and organizational culture in positively affecting patient care and knowledge allocation.

Discussion

This result from this research shows the significance of distributive justice and training in improving healthcare sector work performance and patient satisfaction. The acceptance of all hypotheses shows that there is a significant link between each variable, associated with the planned framework.

Firstly, distributive justice has a positive impact on work performance. This finding is in line with the previous study, which shows that fair distribution of resources or rewards can improve the self-confidence and obligation of employees (Mohsin et al., 2024; Naseem et al., 2020; Sarfraz et al., 2023). When healthcare sector staff perceives fairness in the working atmosphere, they can perform excellently, which assistances the sector. This result shows the significance of promoting a working environment where all workers feel free, valued, and fairly treated (Santos et al., 2024).

Training and skill development are important components of this research. Organizations allow workers to use their responsibilities more effectively by improving the skills of employees which consequently affect work performance and patient satisfaction (Abdullah et al., 2021). The acceptance of the hypothesis shows that training not only gives power to employees to work hard but also increases the patient satisfaction level. Patients feel more free in the quality of patient care they have when attended by trained experts (Hannawa et al., 2022).

The link between worker performance and patient satisfaction was also accepted, showing that the quality of healthcare sector services has a good impact on the experience and care level of patients (Mohsin et al., 2021; Muhammad et al., 2019; Naiwen et al., 2021; Naseem et al., 2020; Sarfraz et al., 2023). Improved work

performance, driven by a combination of distributive justice and training, leads to better healthcare outcomes, which enhances the patient experience. This finding aligns with prior studies in healthcare that underscore the link between effective service delivery and positive patient outcomes. The study underscores the critical role of fair treatment, ongoing training, and a skilled workforce in healthcare organizations. (Singh et al., 2024). Healthcare administrators should focus on implementing fair practices, continuous training programs, and skill development initiatives to ensure high work performance, thereby enhancing patient satisfaction. (Moldovan et al., 2022).

5. Recommendations and Limitations

Practical Implications

This research is based on practical implementation and encourages the organization to improve fairness or justice in the workroom, this study shows that distributive justice plays an important role in fostering work performance and patient satisfaction. Healthcare experts should implement policies and gratitude, which can higher the motivation, service quality, and maintenance of workers. Therefore, investing in training programs is important for preparing workers with the important skills which address the patient wants. Healthcare sectors and institutions can improve the patient satisfaction level and reputation of an organization by concentrating on patient-centered care or developing performance metrics.

Theoretical Implications

This research is also based on the theoretical framework of distributive justice by showing its importance in the healthcare sector, describing if justice affects employee performance and patient consequences, thus increasing its implication beyond the traditional group atmosphere. Moreover, it incorporates a performance model and training, describing that employee training has a significant influence on work performance and patient satisfaction.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce the established relationship between work performance and patient satisfaction, underscoring its critical relevance in healthcare and the importance of effective service delivery in enhancing patient experiences.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study

This study has practical, theoretical, and empirical foundations. But there are limitations also exist. This study's limitations include restricted generalizability due to specific sample characteristics, such as being drawn from a single healthcare institution or geographic area. Future research should replicate this study across diverse healthcare settings to enhance the validity of the findings. Additionally, while the focus was on distributive justice, exploring other dimensions of organizational justice, like procedural and interactional justice, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of fairness perceptions in healthcare. Longitudinal studies are recommended to better assess causal relationships over time, as the current study relies on cross-sectional data. Expanding the scope to include a wider array of patient satisfaction metrics, such as loyalty and trust, would deepen insights into how work performance impacts various aspects of patient experience. Lastly, investigating potential mediating variables, like employee engagement, and moderating factors, such as organizational culture, could reveal more intricate interactions between distributive justice, training, work performance, and patient satisfaction.

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JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES (JSDS)
VOL. 14, NO. 4(2024), (ISSN 2221-1152)

Conservation Agriculture Adoption Among Maize and Beans Farmers in Maseru, Lesotho: A Look at the Adoption Gradients

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Abstract: Despite the widespread promotion and investment in Conservation Agriculture (CA) by development partners and governments in Southern Africa, the biggest challenge is low adoption rates. This study looks at the CA adoption among maize and beans farmers in Lesotho. The study seeks to enhance the appreciation of factors driving CA adoption. They utilized a multi-stage sampling approach to select the study respondents. The study used purposive sampling to select districts and prominent CA farmers. Simple random sampling was the preferred method to select ordinary CA farmers and conventional farmers to include in the research. The study utilized a structured questionnaire to collect data from 136 households, 37 were CA adopters and 99 were non-CA adopters. The study applied the multinomial logistic regression model to analyze the factors influencing the adoption of CA in Maseru. The study findings show that age, gender, income, training, and field size influence farmers' decision to adopt CA at various adoption gradients while farming experience, land ownership, farmer group membership, access to extension services, soil fertility perceptions, education literacy, occupation, and household size do not influence the adoption of CA. The study concludes that age, gender, income, training, and field size influence farmers' decision to adopt CA at various adoption gradients. The study recommends the capacitation of extension services to improve their competencies as they should be at the center of the promotion of the adoption of sustainable farming practices. Targeted interventions for female farmers are important since the study results showed males have more chances of adopting CA compared to female counterparts.

Keywords: *Conservation Agriculture, Adoption Gradients; Maize, Beans*

1. Introduction

The Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region faces significant challenges from climate change, extreme weather, declining soil fertility, and food insecurity with twenty-three percent (23%) of its population undernourished and more than 35 million people predicted to experience food insecurity by 2050, (FAO and ECA, 2018). Agricultural production continues to be affected negatively, due to heavy impacts from increasing soil erosion and pest infestation further worsening this situation. These issues can be addressed through the adaptation of farming systems that are resilient to climate change and climate extremes (Altieri *et al*., 2015). Conservation Agriculture (CA) is a Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practice that has three major principles, which are; minimum mechanical soil disturbance, permanent soil organic cover, and crop species diversification through varied crop sequences and associations (FAO, 2019). Fredenburg *et al*. (2015) assert that the key innovation in CA is a reduction in soil disturbance. Reducing soil disturbance saves time, energy, and labor while also promoting soil, water, and nutrient preservation for higher crop yields. Soil interventions such as mechanical tillage are reduced to an absolute minimum or avoided, and external inputs such as agrochemicals and plant nutrients of mineral or organic origin are applied optimally and in ways and quantities that do not interfere with, or disrupt, the biological processes and this enhances biodiversity and natural biological processes above and below the ground surface (FAO, 2014). Moreover, minimum tillage improves soil organic matter accumulation, which increases soil fertility and decreases soil erosion (Seitz *et al*., 2019; Kiboi *et al*., 2019; Kiboi *et al*., 2017; Alam *et al*., 2014). Crop productivity is increased by enhanced soil fertility and properties (Thierfelder *et al*., 2015; Grabowski e*t al*., 2016).

Development partners, governments, and extension officers promote the three principles of conservation agriculture together because they are complementary in that, under certain circumstances, the advantages rise sharply if farmers combine more principles/components (Thierfelder *et al*., 2012). FAO (2014) asserts that the permanent soil organic cover CA principle promotes the use of crop residues and live mulch to create permanent soil cover. The permanent soil cover by living or dead plant biomass and minimum soil disturbance reduces topsoil displacement and restores organic carbon content, improves water use efficiency, and helps to

keep soil moisture levels high (Pittelkow, 2015; Liang *et al*., 2015; Thierfelder *et al*., 2015). Mulch with crop residues creates soil cover which lowers water loss from the surface in addition to shielding the soil from erosive forces and raindrop action, soil cover also helps to moderate soil temperature and control weed growth (Nyamagara *et al*., 2013). Live mulch or a variety of crops known as 'cover crops' are grown in between successive crops and are prone to supply nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as cover the soil and stop soil erosion; thus, cover crops should be planted on arable land to reduce synthetic fertilizer use without lowering crop yields and to mitigate the effects of climate change (Qaswar *et al*., 2019, Toma *et al*., 2019; Kaye and Quemada, 2017). FAO (2012) argues that to embrace the crop diversification principle of CA, farmers use crop rotation and intercropping. Intercropping is defined as the simultaneous presence of two or more crops in the same field at the same time, while crop rotation is the practice of alternating different crops in the same field, preferably cereals (maize and wheat) followed by legumes (beans) (Wezel *et al*. 2014). Crop diversification improves soil fertility, nutrient cycling, pest control, and water, and biodiversity regulation without sacrificing yields (Tamburini *et al*. 2020).

Despite the promise of benefits associated with the adoption of CA and its widespread promotion in SSA, it is still not widely adopted (Sakala *et al*., 2021; Anderson and D'Souza, 2014; Giller *et al*., 2009). The low adoption of CA by smallholder farmers in Southern Africa can be attributed to several challenges, some of which are biological, for example, competing uses of crop residues, increases in weeds in the early years after conversion from conventional farming to conservation agriculture, some pests and diseases specific to CA and limited land area to practice crop diversification. Other farmers associate low adoption with economic factors, such as cash constraints, risk aversion, limited access to markets for inputs and outputs, a lack of appropriate tools, and insufficient information and knowledge about CA (Holden and Quiggin, 2017; Thierfelder *et al*., 2015; Holden and Lunduka, 2014). Among the range of incentives that might motivate farmers to adopt sustainable practices like CA, markets could play a significant role in the transition towards sustainable agriculture. An emerging, body of research suggests that demand for sustainable products is rising in the domestic markets in least-developed countries (LDCs) (Oudewater *et al*., 2013; Sherwood *et al*., 2013). Today's consumer wants to know the source of their food, seek transparency regarding production, and want to eat healthier foods (Dimitri and Gardner, 2018). Consumers are also conscious of sustainable farming practices and they demand produce that has been produced sustainably over conventionally produced food.

The pioneer of the promotion of CA in Lesotho is Rev. Basson who was passionate about improving local agriculture and he set out to identify farming practices that relied on low external inputs but were suitable to the local socio-economic conditions. He traveled to South Africa in 2000 where he learned more about CA, which he eventually started to promote in Qacha's Nek with a Sesotho name 'Likoti', through an NGO called Growing Nations (Silici, 2010). Since 2002 conservation agriculture captured the interest of more NGOs, and local and international actors – that included, among others, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and several NGOs. The promotion of CA adoption is on the basis that conservation farming is a strategic means to increase and stabilize agricultural production as well as to prevent and reverse soil erosion. Farmers have received different kinds of incentives to encourage the adoption of water and soil conservation technologies and facilitate the exchange of knowledge among different actors and the associated outcomes of the adoption of CA practices. In 2012 the Food and Agriculture Organization in response to the 2012 food insecurity crisis in Lesotho working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security designed a three-year cycle Programme to assist 18500 households with agricultural technologies helping communities to adapt to climate change (FAO,2014). The Programme promoted CA and improved home gardening and nutrition in all ten districts of Lesotho. Despite all these efforts to promote CA, to the best knowledge of the author, no study has investigated the adoption of CA by farmers in Lesotho and a study seeks to understand factors that inhibit CA adoption by local farmers. Therefore, this study investigated farmer's CA adoption and factors that hinder CA adoption.

2. Materials and Methods

The study area is the Maseru district, which is located on Lesotho's western border to South Africa's Free State Province, with the Caledon River (Mohokare) serving as the boundary. The district's total area is 4 279 km^2, accounting for 14.10 percent of the country's total area (BoS, 2006). Maseru is bounded on the north by Berea, on the east by Thaba-Tseka, on the south by Mohale's Hoek, and on the southwest by Mafeteng. Lesotho's

western districts are predominantly lowland, rising from 1 500m (4900 ft) to 1 800m (5900 ft) above sea level. With 49% of all Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) established in Maseru as per the distribution of districts, Maseru is the largest entrepreneurial hub in Lesotho, and most of these SMMEs are engaged in the agricultural and retail sectors (Tau, 2020). Agriculture in Maseru, like the rest of the country, is characterized by low productivity. This is due to high climate variability, severe land degradation, and the use of traditional agronomic practices, which results in low adoption of labor-intensive practices such as CA (CIAT and World Bank, 2018). Crop production is the main agricultural activity for the people of Lesotho, and the country's important crops include maize, wheat, sorghum, beans and peas, potatoes, fruit trees, and fresh vegetables such as tomatoes and cabbage. Maize and sorghum are the most important staple food crops, accounting for more than 60% and 10% of all cultivated land, respectively. Maize frequently receives policy and financial assistance, through input subsidies (CIAT and World Bank, 2018; FAO, 2017). Drought and floods are the leading causes of crop failure in Lesotho (Government of Lesotho, 2015).

The study used a cross-sectional quantitative research design, meaning numerical data was collected at one point in time (Sesoai *et al.*, 2019). The study collected quantitative data and adopted a survey research technique to obtain data from farmers. A structured interview schedule with close-ended questions was used to collect data, administering questions face to face to the respondents, to allow the researcher to clearly explain and interpret questions that the respondents may find difficult to understand to obtain correct and truthful answers (Nxumalo, *et al*., 2019). The interview schedule was pre-tested to identify and clear up any unintended confusion and the participants in the pilot trial were randomly selected from the study population, this group was not part of the study respondents (Abawi, 2017). The respondents to this study were selected through multi-stage sampling. The first stage of sampling involved the selection of regions of Maseru where there is active practice of Conservation Agriculture. A purposive sampling method was used to select those regions as recommended by the Department of Agricultural Research in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and District Agricultural Administrators in the Department of Field Services. In the second stage, respondents from different villages were selected, whereby purposive sampling was used to select prominent CA adopters, based on the information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) since this group of farmers is difficult to identify as they are not many prominent and successful CA farmers. The study used simple random sampling to select average CA farmers and conventional farmers. Respondents were randomly selected from the list of crop farmers in the chosen areas. Randomization was performed using Microsoft Office Excel to select the respondents from the available list. A representative sample size of the farmers selected by the simple random sampling technique was determined using Slovin's formula (Oduniyi et al., 2022):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where n is the sample size
N is the total population of the maize and beans farmers in the district and
e is the margin of error estimated at 5%

The sample for the study according to Slovin's formulae was 136 households, 37 were CA adopters and 99 were non-CA adopters. The multinomial logistic regression model was used to identify factors influencing CA adoption in the study area. Logistic regression, or as it is alternatively called, the logit model or logistic model examines the relationship between a categorical response variable and multiple explanatory variables and estimates the likelihood of an event occurring by fitting data to a logistic curve. Logistic regression is one of the most used statistical techniques in research. A multinomial logistic regression model can be used when the dependent variable is comprised of more than two categories (Park, 2013). According to Bazezew *et. al.* (2015), there is no ordering in the decision process of adoption of CA practices, therefore unordered choice models such as the multinomial logistic regression model can be used. The study applied the multinomial logistic regression model to analyze the factors influencing the adoption of CA in Maseru.

To analyze factors influencing the adoption of CA in the study area the model explored the socioeconomic, biophysical, and demographic variables affecting CA adoption. In this study, an adopter was defined as someone who used at least one of the three core principles of CA: minimum soil disturbance, permanent soil cover through cover crops and mulching, and crop diversification through crop rotation and intercropping (Nkhoma, Kalinda, and Kuntashula, 2017). There must be an incremental benefit when compared to current technology

or practices for a smallholder farmer to adopt new or improved practices (Jacobs *et al*., 2018). If anticipated benefits outweigh those under conventional tillage practices, smallholder farmers would adopt the full CA package or more of its components. Some studies on CA (for example, Thierfelder *et al*., 2013) found that smallholder farmers tend to adopt some of the components, typically crop rotation, intercropping, and crop residues (Chichongue *et al*., 2020).To capture the relationship between the CA adoption (dependent variables) and socioeconomic, biophysical, and institutional factors (independent variables) influencing adoption, the multinomial logit model was used as it allows the analysis of farmers' decisions across more than two categories in the dependent variable. Furthermore, it is possible to determine the probabilities for the adoption of different CA practices (Ayuya *et al*., 2012). This probability is given by:

$$Prob\ (Y_i = j) = \frac{e^{ß_j' x_i}}{\Sigma_{k=0}^{j} e^{ß_j' x_i}},\ j = 0, 1, \ldots, j \qquad (2)$$

Where Y_iIs the farming practice adopted by a household *I*, $ß_k'$ are the set of coefficients to be estimated and X_iIs the set of explanatory variables, and:

$$Prob\ (Y_i = j) = \frac{e^{ß_j' x_i}}{1 + \Sigma_{k=0}^{j} e^{ß_j' x_i}},\ j = 0, 1, \ldots, j,\ ß_0 = 0 \qquad (3)$$

Prob $(Y_i = j)$ is the probability of being in each of the groups compared to the reference group. *Prob* (0) is the probability of being in the reference group. The reference group's coefficients are normalized to zero when the model is estimated. This is due to the requirement that all other group's probabilities add up to one. One of the outcome variables (for example, full CA or conventional farming) must be excluded and used as the reference, leaving six unique sets of parameters to be identified and estimated (Zulu-Mbata *et al*., 2016). For this model, conventional farming was selected as the reference against which to compare all other farming practice groups. The variables that the study considers to be crucial for the adoption of CA practices are listed in Table 1 and each one is explained. These variables were used in the multinomial logit model to estimate the factors influencing the adoption of CA practices and the model equations are as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + ß_1 X_{1i} + ß_2 X_{2i} + ß_3 X_{3i} + ß_4 X_{4i} + ß_5 X_{5i} + ß_6 X_{6i} + ß_7 X_{7i} + ß_8 X_{8i} + ß_9 X_{9i} + ß_{10} X_{10i} + ß_{11} X_{11i} + ß_{12} X_{12i} + ß_{13} X_{13i} + ß_{14} X_{14i} + ß_{15} X_{15i} + \varepsilon_i \qquad (4)$$

Table 1 below shows how the independent variables are predicted to influence farmers' decision to adopt CA in Maseru.

Table 1: Description and units of variables used in the logistic regression model (logit model)

Dependent variables	Variable description	Expected effect
Y*	Non-CA adopter (Conventional Farmer)	Determined by
Y**	Partial CA adopter	Explanatory Variables
Y***	Full CA adopter	
	Explanatory variables	
	Socio-economic characteristics	
Age (X_1)	Age of household head (years)	+/-
Gender (X_2)	Gender of the household head (1 = Male 0 = female)	+
Household size (X_3)	Number of youths and adults in household (≥ 15 years)	+
Education (X_4)	Household head's education level (1 = literate 0 = otherwise)	+
Experience (X_5)	Adequate farming experience of the household head	+/-
Occupation (X_6)	The household head's primary occupation is agriculture (dummy: 1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+/-
Income (X_7)	Average monthly household income (measured in Maluti)	+/-

Animal ownership (X_8)	Animal ownership (dummy: 1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+
Information Access (X_9)	Means to access information (dummy: 1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+
Farmer associations (X_{10})	Participation in farmer associations (dummy: 1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+
	Biophysical Characteristics	
Farm size (X_{11})	Farm size (acres)	+
Fertility (X_{12})	Farmers' perception of soil fertility and soil erosion (dummy: 1 = Fertile 0 = Infertile)	+
	Institutional Characteristics	
Land tenure (X_{13})	Lack of land tenure security (1 = if secure 0 = otherwise)	+
Extension Access (X_{14})	Access for extension services (1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+
Training (X_{15})	Limited access to research and technical assistance (dummy: 1 = yes 0 = otherwise)	+
β1... βn	Coefficients of independent variables X1….Xn	
α	Intercept	
ε	Random error term	
ί	ith observation in the sample	

Source: Adopted from Chichongue *et al*., 2020

3. Results of the Study

A multinomial regression model was used to determine the factors influencing CA adoption in Maseru. After conducting various tests for multicollinearity, the variables were found to be free from the problem of multicollinearity. The chi-square results show that the likelihood ratio statistics are highly significant (ρ< 0.001), indicating that the model has a reliable explanatory power for CA adoption. This confirms that the variables included in the model are relevant in explaining the factors influencing CA adoption. The value of Pseudo Nagelkerke R^2As at 0.660, suggesting that 66% of the variability in the dependent variable is explained by the set of variables used in the model. The effect of the coefficients was estimated concerning the 'Non CA-adopters' category, as the base category (reference group). Therefore, the influence from the estimated coefficients for each choice category is made concerning the base category. Table 2 presents the results of the multinomial regression model for the factors that influence CA adoption in Maseru.

Table 2: **Parameter estimates of the multinomial logit model**

Adoption category		B	Odd	Wald	Sig.
Non-adopters	(Reference Group)				
	Intercept	-37.871		0.000	0.985
	Age	0.065	1.067	3.458	**0.063****
	Gender				
	1 (Male)	1.395	4.037	4.215	**0.040****
	0 (Female)	0[b]			
	Household Size	-0.075	0.928	0.360	0.548
	Field Size	0.047	1.048	0.254	0.614
	Education Literacy				
	1 (Literate)	15.846	0.972	0.007	0.932
	0 (Illiterate)	0[b]			
	Occupation				
	1 (Farming)	-2.066	0.127	2.662	0.103

	0 (Otherwise)	0[b]			
	Household Income				
	4 (More than M5000)	3.510	33.439	3.717	**0.054****
	3 (M2001 to M5000)	3.628	37.626	4.652	**0.031***
	2 (M1000 to M2000)	-0.074	0.928	0.010	0.919
	1 (Less than M1000)	0[b]			
Partial CA adopters	**Farming Experience**				
	4 (More than 20 years)	17.813	0.872	0.000	0.993
	3 (11 to 20 years)	17.240	1.412	0.000	0.993
	2 (6 to 10 years)	18.305	1.579	0.000	0.993
	1 (5 years or less)	0[b]			
	Land Ownership				
	1 (Secure)	-0.157	0.839	0.041	0.839
	0 (Not secure)	0[b]			
	Soil Fertility Perception				
	1 (Fertile)	0.662	0.309	1.037	0.309
	0 (Not fertile)	0[b]			
	Training				
	1 (Received)	4.290	72.991	13.480	**0.000*****
	0 (Not received)	0[b]			
	Farmer Group				
	1 (Member)	-0.059	0.932	0.007	0.932
	0 (Non-member)	0[b]			
	Extension Access				
	1 (Access)	-1.816	0.163	2.037	0.154
	0 (No access)	0[b]			

Adoption category		**B**	**Odd**	**Wald**	**Sig.**
Non-adopters	(Reference Group)				
	Intercept	-72.043		0.000	0.991
	Age	-0.41	0.960	0.181	0.671
	Gender				
	1 (Male)	2.139	8.494	1.257	0.262
	0 (Female)	0[b]			
	Household Size	-0.075	0.927	0.079	0.779
	Field Size	0.472	1.603	3.189	**0.074****
	Education Literacy				
	1 (Literate)	-0.119	0.887	0.080	0.778
	0 (Illiterate)	0[b]			
	Occupation				
	1 (Farming)	15.167	3862067.0	0.000	0.997
	0 (Otherwise)	0[b]			
	Household Income				
	4 (More than M5000)	4.171	64.806	0.000	0.999
	3 (M2001 to M5000)	-14.898	3.387	0.000	0.997
	2 (M1000 to M2000)	-1.505	0.222	0.532	0.466
	1 (Less than M1000)	0[b]			
Full CA adopters	**Farming Experience**				
	4 (Over 20 years)	17.704	488416.20	0.000	0.996
	3 (11 to 20 years)	5.372	215.309	0.000	0.999
	2 (6 to 10 years)	-1.430	0.239	0.000	1.000
	1 (5 years or less)	0[b]			

Land Ownership				
1 (Secure)	17.954	62688652	0.000	0.994
0 (Not secure)	0[b]			
Soil Fertility Perception				
1 (Fertile)	1.413	4.108	0.603	0.437
0 (Not fertile)	0[b]			
Training				
1 (Received)	21.480	213029648	0.000	0.992
0 (Not Received)	0[b]			
Farmer Group				
1 (Member)	1.837	6.276	1.175	0.278
0 (Non-member)	0[b]			
Extension Access				
1 (Access)	-20.912	8.283	0.000	0.992
0 (No Access)	0[b]			

*****, **, and * indicate statistical significance level at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.**

As shown in Table 2 above, among all the 13 variables that were considered to influence CA adoption, 5 were considered to have a significant impact on the decision to adopt CA. These variables are Age, Gender, Income, Field Size, and Training. The training was found to have a significant impact on the decision to accept CA for the partial CA adopters group at a 1% significance level. Gender was found to have a significant impact on CA adoption for the partial CA adopters group at a 5% significance level. Age and income were found to have an impact on CA adoption for the partial CA adopters group at a 10% significance level, while Field Size was found to have a significant impact on the decision to accept CA for the full CA adopters group at a 10% level of significance. The effect of some significant variables is not similar for the different categories; some may be highly significant to affect the choice decision for a particular category and may be insignificant for the other category.

Age: The coefficient of the variable age is positive (0.065) and is significant at a 10% significance level of significance. This implies that age has a positive influence on the decision of the farmer to partially adopt CA but is insignificant for full CA adoption. The positive coefficient of the variable and the odds ratio of 1.067 in the partial adopters group indicates that a 1-year increase in age increases the odds of a farmer becoming a CA adopter rather than a non-adopter (conventional farmer) by 1.067 holding all the other variables constant. Previous studies have shown that a person's age affects their mental attitude towards a new technology, and this influences adoption in a variety of ways. Owomboh and Idumah (2015) argue that older farmers are less likely to engage in long-term perspective activities such as land conservation and are less likely to adopt CA than younger farmers.

Gender: The coefficient for gender is positive and significant at a 5% level of significance. This indicates that gender affects the decision to partially adopt CA but not full CA adoption. The coefficient of this variable is positive and the odds ratio is 4.037. This indicates that relative to females, males are 4.037 times more likely to be CA adopters instead of non-adopters (conventional farmers), holding all the other variables constant. The reason for this could be that due to social barriers, access and control of resources and cultural barriers such as male extension agents tend to address male-headed households. Also, female-headed households, who are mainly widows, divorcees, and unmarried women, have limited access to production resources such as land (Gilbert, 2013).

Income: The coefficient of the variable income is positive and at a 10% significance level for the partial CA adopters group with an income of more than M5000 monthly, and at 5% for the partial adopters group earning between M2001 and M5000 monthly but is insignificant for full adopters group. The positive coefficient and an odd ratio of 33.439 for respondents' incomes of more than M5000 monthly suggests that holding other variables constant, farmers who earn more than M5000 monthly are 33.439 times more likely to adopt CA instead of practicing conventional farming than farmers who earn less than M1000 monthly.

Again, the positive coefficient and an odds ratio of 37.626 for the category of farmers who earn between M2001 and M5000 indicates that holding other variables constant, farmers earning between M2001 to M5000 are 37.626 times more likely to become CA adopters instead of conventional farmers (non-adopters) than farmers earning less than M1000 monthly. These results are similar to those of Gilbert (2013) who found that farmers with high income are more likely to adopt CA compared to farmers with low income. A high household income increases the capacity to accept and utilize an innovation because high-income farmers can afford the costs of implementing CA practices (Hanitriniaina, 2017).

Training: The coefficient of this variable is positive and significant at a 5% level of significance. This implies that training affects the decision to partially adopt CA but not the full adoption decision. The sign of the coefficient is positive and the odds ratio is 72.991. This indicates that the odds of farmers who have received training to become CA adopters instead of non-adopters are 72.991 times more than farmers who have not received training, holding other variables constant. Access to farmer training increases participation in improved technology and participation in farmer training programs positively influences adoption as it facilitates the uptake of new technologies (Abdoulaye *et al*., 2014). Training is a key variable in the promotion of the adoption of technologies. It builds the capacity of the farmers to use the technology effectively.

Field Size: The variable field size has a positive coefficient and is significant at a 10% level of significance to affect the decision to not partially but fully adopt CA. The sign of the coefficient is positive and the odds ratio is 1.603. This suggests that a unit increase in field size raises the odds of a farmer becoming a CA adopter instead of a non-adopter by 1.603, holding other variables constant. The findings are in line with those of a study from Zimbabwe which showed farm size to have a positive effect on CA adoption (Kunzekweguta *et al*., 2017). However, these findings contradict those of Ntshangase *et al.* (2018) whose study found that farmer adoption of CA is negatively correlated to farm size.

4. Discussion of Findings of the Study

The study results indicate farmers perceive training as a key enabler and influencer in the decision to partially adopt CA. In most cases, farmers receive training from the extension officers, and in Lesotho, there have been some projects that have also contributed to the training of farmers. Farmers that have received training tend to adopt as they understand the correct CA implementation as well as its benefits, however, they will also tend to adopt principles that would have been emphasized by their trainers. For instance, in Lesotho 'Likoti' was widely promoted, which tends to be attributed to a negative perception of CA by farmers as they view CA as laborious. It is possible farmers partially adopt as they decide based on the resources they have and the type of farming system they operate on their farm. For example, the issue of crop residue is always contested in Lesotho where rangelands are easily depleted due to over-exploitation and climate change-related challenges. The study findings indicate that age has a positive influence on the decision of the farmer to partially adopt CA. Younger farmers have more potential and incentives to engage in land conservation activities, therefore they are more likely to adopt CA. Partial adoption could be the result of a lack of results to fully adopt or ignorance of the benefits of full adoption. Training programs targeting the youth to increase awareness and also financing such as targeted grants and loans could assist young farmers in fully adopting CA.

Development programs and interventions need to be gender sensitive to contribute towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 which focuses on gender equality. CA as a sustainable agriculture practice needs to be gender-neutral for wider adoption by farmers. The study results indicate that gender affects the decision to partially adopt CA. Males tend to adopt CA compared to their female counterparts. This could be due to resource constraints common among female farmers compared to male farmers. Household chores in most cases and some of the unique responsibilities of women such as nursing babies which at times is the reason they are not able to attend trainings or gatherings that may benefit them. It can be argued that the use of information communication technologies is inclusive and women can benefit from this as well as youth who spend most of their time on the internet and their electronic gadgets.

The age of the farmer is an important variable in the adoption decision, young people tend to be risk takers in contrast to older and mature farmers who are more risk averse. This behavior is evident in the adoption

of new technologies, it was concluded from the results of this study that age has a positive influence on CA partial adoption. Since the coefficient is positive this implies that chances of partially adopting CA increase as farmers get older. This result could be due to farming experience that increases knowledge and skills. Older farmers have more exposure and opportunity to experiment with many different farm practices, therefore they are in a better position to partially adopt fully knowing the benefits. They also in most cases have assets and finance to implement new technologies compared to young farmers that have no finance and capital in most cases.

The income of the farmers for this study was presented in category 4 categories that included more than M5000; M2001 to M5000; M1000 to M2000 and less than M100. Farmer incomes are generally low hence the categories stated from less than 1000 and the highest income category was M5000 and above. The study concludes that farmers who earn higher incomes have higher odds of adopting CA compared to farmers who earn lower incomes. Income is a key determinant of the adoption of technologies. Adoption of technologies requires some level of investment. The study results showed a relationship between income and adoption of CA for partial CA adopters, however for full CA adopters income is not significant. Since the full CA adopters are already on the full CA adoption gradient income levels no longer influence CA adoption. Income is critical for adoption since in the early years of adoption yields may decline and a safety net is important before production levels increase over time as soil fertility improves.

The study concludes that **field size** has a significant impact on the decision to adopt CA for those farmers operating at the full CA adoption gradient. Lesotho smallholding farming is associated with small holdings of 0.4-3.2 ha, and this affects production levels negatively since these farmers are resource-constrained. Most of these farmers rely on rain-fed agriculture and they are not able to practice intensive agriculture. Interestingly, this study's results show that there is a relationship between field size and CA full adoption, which suggests that farm size has a positive relationship with full CA adoption. Farmers with large forms or plots have the luxury to commit part of their land or plots to CA since they will not suffer the initial setbacks of CA of low yields. Yields from CA plots increase over time and farmers with small plots or farms may not be comfortable or may not have the capacity to absorb the initial decreases in yields. In most cases, farmers with bigger farms/plots have more resources and therefore can adopt new technologies with ease.

The training was found to have a significant impact on the decision to accept CA for the partial CA adopters group at a 1% significance level. Gender was found to have a significant impact on CA adoption for the partial CA adopters group at a 5% significance level. Age and income were found to have an impact on CA adoption for the partial CA adopters group at a 10% significance level, while Field Size was found to have a significant impact on the decision to accept CA for the full CA adopters group at a 10% level of significance. The effect of some significant variables is not similar for the different categories; some may be highly significant to affect the choice decision for a particular category and may be insignificant for the other category.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Essentially, the study set out to evaluate the characteristics of CA adopters and non-adopters. The majority of farmers in the research were non-CA adopters, with fewer partial CA adopters and even fewer full CA adopters. This suggests that CA is still not well understood among farmers in Maseru. Female farmers outnumbered male farmers. This is because women tend to handle the majority of farm work in addition to other household tasks such as fetching water, caring for children, and cooking. None of the full CA adopters had rented or borrowed their fields and none of the partial CA adopters had rented land. Most land tenants are unwilling to implement conservation methods. This is because once soil fertility and agricultural productivity have improved considerably the landowner may reclaim the land. When compared to non-adopters, CA adopters have greater access to the extension. Extension personnel and fellow farmers are crucial in disseminating knowledge about new technologies. When compared to non-adopters, CA adopters are more likely to be members of farmer groups. A farmer who joins an association receives access to information about prospective economic and leisure gains from using CA, which can affect adoption rates. Considerably more CA adopters had received training on CA than non-adopters. This demonstrates that CA adoption is favorably related to training. Farmers learn how to use CA through demonstrations by extension personnel.

The study also intended to identify factors influencing the adoption of CA in Maseru. Age, gender, income, field size, and training all played a role in the decision to adopt CA. A farmer's age improved his or her chances of being a CA adopter rather than a non-adopter (conventional farmer). Males were more likely than females to be CA adopters rather than non-adopters (conventional farmers) as female farmers have limited access to production resources such as land. Farmers with higher incomes were shown to be more likely to use CA than those with lower incomes. A high household income may boost the capacity to embrace and use innovation since high-income farmers can afford the costs of adopting and practicing CA. Farmers who have received training were more likely to become CA adopters instead of non-adopters. This is because access to farmer training promotes involvement in improved technology, and participation in farmer training programs positively influences the uptake of new technologies. Finally, an increase in field size was discovered to improve the likelihood of a farmer becoming a CA adopter rather than a non-adopter since farmers with big land sizes can spare a piece of their land to try out CA.

Additionally, the study aimed to describe the constraints to the adoption of CA in Maseru. Respondents identified a lack of knowledge of CA concepts as the most significant limitation. A huge number of farmers are aware of CA but lack sufficient information about how it works. This demonstrates that a lack of understanding of CA as a package is a fundamental barrier to CA adoption. The tedious nature of CA was recognized as the key barrier impacting farmers' negative perceptions of it. A significant demand is the development and availability of machines and equipment designed to alleviate the effort associated with practicing CA. The majority of CA adopters stated that they did not incur any significant costs while practicing CA, demonstrating that CA is generally less expensive than conventional agriculture. Increased weeds and soil compaction were the challenges encountered with minimum tillage, the difficulty of digging basins was the major challenge with planting basins, and the infestation of pests and diseases was a major challenge regarding mulching.

Finally, the study sought to determine the factors affecting the selection of maize and beans marketing outlets by farmers in Maseru. The vast majority of farmers sold their produce to consumers, followed by street vendors, retailers, and finally collectors. Just a few farmers used cooperatives and wholesalers as their marketing channels. Households with bigger land sizes were found to be likely to sell to consumers. Older farmers seem to prefer rural markets over urban ones. Transaction costs rise as the distance between farmers and improved markets increases, which makes it difficult for rural smallholder farmers to select market channels of their choice for their produce. It was also discovered that households with larger plots of land are more inclined to choose the consumer's market outlet.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

Improving the effectiveness of the extension system.

The study concluded that extension services are essential for distributing information about new technology based on the study findings, therefore the government must improve the effectiveness and outreach of extension services to rural farmers to train them about Conservation Agriculture and help them address the challenges relating to its implementation.

Establish effective and more frequent training programs for farmers.

The poor educational background of farmers necessitates regular training; therefore, NGOs and extension personnel should hold frequent training programs. The study findings and conclusions suggest that access to farmer training has a positive influence on CA adoption and encourages participation in the use of improved technology. Farmers that participate in farmer training programs are more likely to adopt new technologies. In addition, since the majority of the farmers had a low level of education, CA adoption by farmers is mostly influenced by NGOs and extension services that provide training to farmers.

Establish and strengthen farmer groups/ associations.

Farmers should be encouraged to form or join existing farmer groups and associations to enhance their capacities to learn from each other and exchange reliable information. The study found that CA adopters are more likely to be members of farmer groups than non-adopters. A farmer who joins an association obtains

access to information about the potential environmental, agronomic, and economic benefits of utilizing CA, which can influence adoption rates positively.

Mechanization of Conservation Agriculture.
The study recommends the improvement of mechanization of Conservation Agriculture by encouraging, equipping, and providing incentives for local entrepreneurs to offer mechanization services. This is likely to increase the availability of CA machinery, making it feasible for farmers to implement it on large fields. Since most farmers associate CA laboriousness as the major constraint influencing the negative perception that farmers have against it, the development and availability of machines and equipment designed to alleviate the work associated with CA is a big requirement.

Simultaneous adoption of minimum tillage and permanent soil organic cover principles of CA.
The study encourages farmers to adopt the minimum soil disturbance principle of CA together with the permanent soil organic cover principle to prevent soil compaction, suppress weeds, and enhance water infiltration into the soil in their gardens and fields. The study findings identified increased weeds and soil compaction as the main challenges encountered with minimum tillage. Soil compaction is caused by the decline in soil organic matter which is brought about by excessive intensive tillage. Therefore, permanent soil organic cover through mulching or by cover crops adds organic matter to the soil and suppresses weeds.

Linking smallholder farmers to the different marketing channels.
According to the study findings, most farmers sell their produce to consumers. Some sold to street vendors and retailers, and a few sold to collectors. Even fewer farmers sold their produce to cooperatives and wholesalers. Therefore, farmers must be informed of the different marketing channels and be linked to such markets to motivate them to increase the quantity and quality of their produce and sell more.

Improve transportation and infrastructure in the country.
Because of the distance between farmers and improved markets, transaction costs rise, making it difficult for rural smallholder farmers to select market channels of their choice for their agricultural produce. The government must improve transportation and infrastructure to facilitate the marketing of agricultural produce in the country and provide utilities and services essential for business.

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JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES (JSDS)
VOL. 14, NO. 4(2024), (ISSN 2221-1152)

A Study on the Role of Men in Curbing the Scourge of Violence against Women and Children in KwaZulu-Natal: South Africa

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Abstract: In South Africa, the rates of sexual violence and rape are alarmingly high compared to other countries with similar populations and economies. In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, South Africa recorded 53,498 sexual offences. Therefore, approaches and interventions geared towards addressing Gender Based Violence need to correspond with the understanding of the pivotal role that men could play in dealing with this crisis. The main objective of this study was to explore the role of men in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children in KZN. The study used quantitative methods as well as qualitative methods. The results highlighted that men are not doing enough to curb GBV. Moreover, 40% of the respondents admitted to touching women inappropriately and passing sexist comments to women, whereas 25% indicated that they beat their partners if they were 'disobedient' or to prove their masculinity. Also, the findings depicted that the most prevalent type of abuse is physical abuse (65.8%) followed by the sexual exploitation of children (54.4%); emotional and psychological abuse (44.7%); abandonment and neglect (39.5%); and sexual violence (35.5%). Results paint a disturbing picture of South African gender relations and behove strong intervention from the authorities to stop this scourge.

Keywords: *Sexual Violence, Rape, Femicide, Covid-19, Unemployment, Masculinity*

1. Introduction

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) or, specifically, violence against women (VAW) is a global crisis with human rights and public health elements and has escalated to unprecedented levels in South Africa (Sanjel, 2013). It is pervasive and takes place in all societies and at all levels and stages of a woman's life cycle (Terry, 2007a, De Lange and Mitchell, 2014). This has given birth to campaigns like the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. GBV is a serious concern in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), in particular, has been cited as having one of the highest incidences of sexual violence (WHO, 2013). In his address at *the Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide* on November 1, 2018, the South African president highlighted Gender-Based violence as a profound crisis fragmenting society at large. He further underscored its pervasive impact on every community nationwide, noting that it disrupts the lives of numerous families. The President, also, contended that Gender-Based violence violates the core of the nation's collective humanity (RSA, 2018). Between the years 2018 and 2020, the province of KwaZulu-Natal acknowledged the severity of this crisis and its heavy effects on the experiences and well-being of survivors, children, families, communities, and the wider community (Terry, 2007b).

Sexual violence in South Africa remains a national crisis as there were 42289 rape cases in 2020 and 36330 in 2020/21 (SAPS, 2021). Statistics for the period 1 July to 30 September 2021, indicated that 9 556 people were raped, whereas 11 315 were raped during the festive season (1 October and 31 December 2021) (SAPS, 2021). KZN recorded 8759 sexual offences and 7243 rape cases in 2021. Moreover, the extreme cases of femicide (the murder of women by men) have sparked outrage in the country as there were over 2930 femicide cases reported in 2017/18 (Commission for Gender Equality, 2018). Sexual violence, including rape, remains an enduring and gendered challenge within South African society, where women and children are disproportionately at risk. The circumstances surrounding incidents of sexual violence are diverse; perpetrators may be intimately connected to the victim, such as partners, family members, or individuals within the community, as well as strangers (Machisa et al., 2017). The prevalence of rape in South Africa far surpasses that of many other nations and may be rooted in the country's turbulent political and social history alongside entrenched structural and gender inequalities (HRC, 2016). Research has shown that rape happens more in social settings of poverty where a lack of job opportunities is pervasive (Jewkes et al., 2011). Also,

disturbingly, the risk of rape is heightened among individuals who experienced abuse as minors, those with dysfunctional family backgrounds and young women who consume drugs and alcohol (Morrison et al., 2007).

According to Caicedo-Roa et al. (2020), femicide is the murder of women and girls based on their gender identity. Feminicide, or the murdering of women, is usually motivated by a lack of humanity, greed, and fear of the consequences (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019). This is the most extreme kind of Gender-Based violence, in which males kill women with whom they previously had an intimate relationship. This is typically due to fear of the consequences; for example, after raping a woman, men may feel obligated to murder her to eliminate the evidence (Zara et al., 2019). Femicide is primarily caused by societal, sociological, and sometimes theological circumstances that give men power over women, leading men to assume that they have natural control over women (Hadi, 2017). The vast majority of reported femicide cases involve an intimate relationship. Unfortunately, femicide is more common in homes, family, and related contexts, where one would expect all women to be safe. It is no secret that South Africa has one of the highest rates of gendered violence in the world. The murder rate of women in South Africa is around five times the global norm, with at least half of those killed by an intimate partner (Boonzaier, 2023). Occasionally, the murder of a South African woman makes national and international headlines (e.g. the murder of the model Reeva Steenkamp by her intimate partner). Boonzaier (2023) asserted that the way these crimes are reported is critical in moulding public perception of crimes against women, gendered violence, and the sexist, misogynistic, and patriarchal conditions that give rise to them.

Gender-Based violence and femicide (GBVF) have long been significant issues in South Africa, with high rates documented even before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, resulting in a surge in GBVF incidents across the nation. Before the pandemic, South Africa already faced alarmingly high rates of GBVF, significantly surpassing global averages. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 12.1 in every 100,000 women are victims of femicide in South Africa each year, which is five times the global average of 2.65 (Govender, 2023). Factors contributing to these high rates include entrenched patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and limited access to justice and support services.

2. Literature Review

The onset of Covid- 19 pandemic proved disastrous for KZN, as the province recorded the highest number of GBV-related incidents and femicide cases. The presence of lockdowns where single families could be trapped in one place for longer periods meant that abuse was easily happening without recourse for victims. This is attributed to the fact that GBV prevention and responses were not declared as essential services by the state; therefore, facilities that care for victims of abuse were not operational during the lockdown (Roy et al., 2021). South African Lifeline reported that cases related to GBV increased by 500% starting from when the lockdown commenced in March 2019 (Metsing, 2020). A major contributing factor to such a drastic increase was high unemployment and the shifting of priorities by the government to COVID-19 responses, which led to GBV prevention and responses being deprived of state attention (Roy et al., 2021). Since people were restricted from recreational places, alcohol became the main source of entertainment during the COVID-19 lockdowns; this made it easier for people to abuse alcohol, which subsequently led to increased GBV-related incidents. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic had an adverse effect on businesses, and as a result, the unemployment rate also rose to an all-time high in 2020. South Africa's unemployment rate was at 33.9% in the Q2 of 2022 whereas, during the fourth quarter of 2021 it was at 35.3% (StatsSA, 2022).

Economic problems stemming from quarantine and unemployment further exacerbated tensions within households, leading to increased violence against women. Additionally, patriarchal social norms have perpetuated unequal power dynamics, limiting women's ability to seek help or escape abusive situations (Ostadtaghizadeh et al., 2023). The closure of essential services such as shelters and the lack of access to social support networks also contributed to the rise in GBV incidents. Women working in the informal sector face additional challenges, including reduced access to care and treatment facilities (Ndlovu et al., 2022). Moreover, the digital gap in e-learning and access to social networks hindered communication and support for vulnerable women. Efforts to address GBV during the pandemic were hampered by numerous factors, including the lack of transparent rules and registration systems for GBV cases, stigmatization of victims, and insufficient

government regulations. The absence of clear internal rules and registration systems led to a lack of knowledge about the actual number of GBV related incidents and hindered effective government responses.

Additionally, lockdown measures worsened the situation, with restrictions on movement and economic downturns confining many individuals with their abusers. The closure of schools and workplaces further limited opportunities for victims to seek help or escape abusive situations. The South African Police Service (SAPS) recorded 42,289 GBVF in the 2019/2020 fiscal year, reflecting an increase from 41,583 in 2018/2019, indicative of the overall rise in GBVF (SAPS, 2021). The strain on healthcare and social services during the pandemic also hindered access to support for survivors of GBVF, leading to a notable surge in incidents during the lockdown period (Perez-Vincent et al., 2020).

Numerous factors contributed to the increase in GBVF during the COVID-19 pandemic. Quarantine and social distancing measures intensified stress and isolation, particularly for women, amplifying the risk of violence within households. Economic problems stemming from quarantine and unemployment exacerbated tensions, leading to increased violence against women. Additionally, patriarchal social norms perpetuated unequal power dynamics, limiting women's ability to seek help or escape abusive situations. Efforts to address GBVF have been made through legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act and the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF. Specialized services for survivors, improved law enforcement responses, and awareness campaigns challenging harmful gender norms have been prioritized. Collaboration with civil society and the private sector further supports efforts to curb GBVF. COVID-19 exacerbated GBVF in South Africa, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of violence and create a safer and more equitable society for all South Africans. Efforts to address GBVF must continue both during and after the pandemic, focusing on holistic approaches that address the social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to Gender-Based violence.

The high unemployment rate in South Africa was one of the major driving forces of GBV as families were struggling to put food on the table which resulted in psychological challenges. It was not until the 13th of April 2020 that clarification was made and GBV organizations were permitted to operate, however, that was not an effective prevention strategy as GBV cases continued to increase (Roy *et al*., 2021). According to the study conducted by Roy et al. (2021) in Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa showed that 99.3% of the respondents agreed that COVID-19 drastically increased the prevalence of GBV. The GBV prevention and response strategy starts with acknowledging that GBV is a pandemic on its own and therefore deserves the same response as COVID-19 (Mittal and Singh, 2020). Perrin et al. (2019) suggested that there should be an increase in community initiatives against GBV and that there is a need to create more awareness to discourage the fear of reporting cases of GBV even if it does not affect one directly. The government needs to assist the GBV support groups financially as they play a pivotal role in dealing with GBV (Van Gelder et al., 2020).

Violence against women and children (VAWC) in South Africa is extreme in terms of its prevalence and severity. The Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, reported that 10 006 people were raped between April and June 2021 and most of the perpetrators were not found (RSA, 2021). The true extent of rape and Gender-Based violence is significantly underestimated, as many survivors endure in silence. Barriers such as limited access to justice, disempowerment, intimidation, and fear of further trauma, scrutiny, and stigma within the criminal justice system often deter these victims from coming forward (Norman et al., 2010). Gender-Based violence is a well-documented matter that is frequently driven by men and boys, community members, and others who perpetuate harmful masculine norms within KwaZulu-Natal. Although there is an increasing understanding of the potential drawbacks of narrowly defining the scope of GBV as that of between men and women (Graaff, 2021) there is a realization that this is indeed a scourge worth fighting against. Eliminating GBV is a collective responsibility, requiring the entire community's engagement. Men and boys need to take on active roles as agents of change to dismantle the existing status quo. The inclusion of men and boys will provide perspective into psycho-social behaviors and patriarchal norms that lead to GBV. Moreover, GBV studies tend to focus more on the victims of abuse (women and children), and there are extremely limited studies focusing on a male's perspective in terms of their role in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children. Approaches and interventions geared towards addressing GBV should be married to understanding the pivotal role that men play or could potentially play in dealing with this crisis. Because of the nature of GBV generally, it is hard to research as it is often not seen in public and victims may not be in a position to speak about it due to fear

(Terry, 2007b). This article explores the role of men in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children in KZN, South Africa examines the factors that contribute to high GBV incidents in KZN and will conclude by recommending and proposing remedial measures in combating and responding to violence against women and children.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1993) defined GBV as the "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately." This can involve various forms of abuse ranging from some that are mild in effect to some that are extreme. Scholars like Kapur (2020) and Terry (2007a) go at length to discuss what GBV is about and how it can be eliminated. In South Africa, all forms of GBV have been found with some very extreme, including femicide. Femicide is the most extreme form of GBV as it involves the murder of a woman by a man. It is usually linked to the entrenched gender inequality and discrimination against women from men who feel entitled and in performance of their masculinity end up killing women Prieto-Carrón et al. (2007). Authors like Hill and Diaz (2021) Stark (2015) and Graaff (2021) have looked at the issue of GBV and how it is carried out. Femicide has been rising in South Africa with some notable cases being widely reported in the media. However, reporting GBV has always been a hindrance to dealing with the scourge with worldwide reporting very low and reasons offered including embarrassment, belief that there is no use reporting, and belief that violence is part of life Palermo et al. (2014). This agrees with De Vries et al. (2014) study on adolescents' beliefs about forced sex in KZN where they found that gender violence and related beliefs seem to be quite accepted by males and females. This is a problem that also extends to gender as men are less inclined to disclose violence even in their families. This may be due to gender norms that are inequitable from a very young age where men are told to uphold certain masculinities which engender negative attitudes and behaviors (Mills et al., 2015).

Numerous theoretical frameworks, such as Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and social learning theory, have been used to understand the link between masculinity and GBV. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is one of the most widely used frameworks. It emphasizes the dominant social construction of masculinity, which promotes aggression, control, and dominance over women (Bozkurt et al., 2015). This theory highlights how men often use violence to establish and maintain their power within social hierarchies, contributing to the prevalence of GBV. Social learning theory underscores the role of socialization in shaping gender roles and behaviors (Varner et al., 2021). According to Varner et al. (2021), individuals learn and imitate behaviors deemed appropriate for their gender within their social environment. As a result, men exposed to violent and aggressive models of masculinity may be more likely to perpetrate violence against women.

The legacy of apartheid in South Africa continues to reverberate through contemporary society, shaping social dynamics and perpetuating deep-seated inequalities (Zinzombe, 2024). Apartheid's enduring impact is evident in the pervasive violence that plagues the nation, with South Africa ranking among the most violent countries globally (Norman et al., 2007; Enaifoghe et al., 2021). This violence is not merely a consequence of historical injustices but is intricately linked to the structural inequalities and cultural norms ingrained during the apartheid era (Zinzombe, 2024). Apartheid's institutionalized racism and violence entrenched patterns of exclusion and marginalization, particularly affecting non-white communities (Ndlovu, 2022). These communities continue to face disproportionate levels of poverty, limited access to resources, and systemic discrimination, perpetuating cycles of deprivation and social unrest.

One of the most profound legacies of apartheid is its influence on gender dynamics and the prevalence of Gender-Based violence and femicide (GBVF) (Ndawonde, 2023). Apartheid's policies not only enforced racial segregation but also disrupted traditional family structures and gender roles (Ndawonde, 2023). The emasculation of men in the face of societal shifts and economic disparities often led to the use of violence as a means of asserting power and control (Ndlovu, 2022). Women, meanwhile, faced heightened vulnerability to intimate partner violence, exacerbated by economic instability and social dislocation (Zinzombe, 2024). The normalization of violence within families and communities perpetuates cycles of abuse, contributing to the endemic nature of GBVF in South Africa. Transgenerational effects further compound the impact of apartheid on contemporary society (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2023). Economic disparities persist across generations, with non-white communities disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2023). The intergenerational transmission of trauma stemming from apartheid's gross human rights violations

has left deep psychological scars, manifesting in feelings of helplessness and despair (Crankshaw and Dwarika, 2023). Moreover, pervasive exposure to violence, both within households and communities, has desensitized individuals to its effects, fostering a culture of acceptance and tolerance towards violence (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2023).

Addressing the legacy of apartheid and its impact on GBVF requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the structural and cultural dimensions of the problem (Ndlovu, 2022). Efforts to dismantle systemic inequalities, such as poverty alleviation programs and affirmative action policies, are crucial for addressing the root causes of violence (Ndlovu, 2022). Additionally, interventions aimed at challenging harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality are essential for preventing GBVF and fostering healthier relationships within communities (Ndawonde, 2023). Education and awareness-raising initiatives play a pivotal role in challenging the normalization of violence and empowering individuals to recognize and reject abusive behavior.

The data from the World Health Organisation shows that South Africa's femicide rate was 12.1 per 100,000 in 2016. This is almost five times higher than the global average of 2.6 per 100,000 (RSA, 2019). Studies on the causes of GBV are well documented with Abbey et al. (2004) and Abbey (2011) detailing some of the problems of intoxication and the abuse of substances as some of the causes. Also, the issue of gender and rurality in South Africa is documented in studies like those of De Lange and Mitchell (2014); stating that the situatedness of the women makes them vulnerable to abuse. Rape stands among the most severe forms of Gender-Based violence. South Africa, as Gouws (2021), contends, is considered a rape-prone society—characterized by high reported incidences of rape, the normalization of rape as a ritualized display of masculinity, or its use as a means for men to exert punishment or intimidation over women (Gouws, 2021: 02).

3. Methodology

Recruitment Strategy and Data Collection

Research participants were recruited from public facilities such as shopping malls, clinics, sports facilities, bus, and taxi ranks, etc. This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. A questionnaire and open-ended questions were used to determine the role of men in combating violence against women and children in KwaZulu-Natal. The research questionnaire comprised 15 questions addressing the demographics, male perspective on their role in addressing violence against women, type and causes of abuse. The qualitative aspect consisted of 9 probing open-ended questions unpacking the causes of GBV. Data were gathered from all 11 districts and 39 local municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. To assist with data collection, 150 data collectors were trained and deployed to various municipalities. On average it took approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. Because of the nature of the study (GBV), minors under the age of 16 were barred from participating in the survey. Therefore, participants were at least 16 years and older. Given the sensitivity of GBV, it is not surprising that men were hesitant to participate in this survey. The participants were black African males from townships and rural areas (n=625).

Sampling strategy

In this study, male participants from KZN were selected through a random sampling method. This technique facilitates the unprejudiced approach that employs randomized selection of samples, thus ensuring that every individual or unit within a population has an equal probability chance of being chosen to reflect for inclusion in the larger population sample (McCombes, 2019). According to Noor et al. (2022), simple random sampling presents both benefits and limitations. While it provides an impartial and representative sample with equal probabilities of selection, it can be labor-intensive, often lacks an accessible public roster of individuals, and may encounter difficulties in heterogeneous and geographically dispersed populations. The sample size for this research was established at 625, determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, which had a yield of 99% confidence level with a 3.5% margin of error.

Data analysis

The quantitative data was subjected to a thorough cleaning and validation process, during which duplicate entries and identified inaccuracies were eliminated, and typographical errors were rectified. To generate the desired outputs, descriptive statistical techniques, particularly frequency analysis, were employed to assist. Frequency tables along with corresponding summary charts were created using the Statistical Package for

Social Sciences (SPSS) and STATA version 17. To analyze qualitative data, thematic analysis (inductive analysis) was utilized. The data analysis methodology followed was crosstabulation and correlation tests for a selection of variables in the survey data. The crosstabulation analysis was used to extract key themes and compare the results of multiple variables in a dataset against one another. The Kendall's Rank Correlation Test is a nonparametric measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an ordinal scale. For this analysis, the following relationships were examined:

- Age vs. Do you think Men in SA are doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children?
- Gender vs. Do you believe that you have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women insights from the participants. Children?
- Age vs. Do you believe that you have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children?

Reliability and Validity

An expert panel, in this study, evaluated the questionnaire through content validity assessments and utilizing cognitive interviews. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was employed to gauge the questionnaire's validity. Furthermore, three specialists, who are experts in academic content were tasked with evaluating the relevance of each question using a four-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated not relevant, 2 indicated slightly relevant, 3 indicated relevant, and 4 indicated highly relevant. The number of experts who rated each item with a score of 3 or 4 was tallied (scores of 3 or 4 were deemed relevant, while scores of 1 or 2 were classified as non-relevant). The recommended I-CVI threshold is between 0.78 and 1.00, and our calculated score was 0.9.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent is acknowledged as a fundamental ethical principle in research across various disciplines; and this was taken into consideration in this study (Sanjari et al., 2014). Key ethical standards considered during this study included honesty, transparency, openness, anonymity, confidentiality, accountability, and informed consent. Participants engaged in this research voluntarily, without any coercion or expectation of financial compensation. Furthermore, the research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Research Control Committee and was further submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for further review and consideration. The ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, following a detailed review of the proposal and research questionnaire. Moreover, the research questionnaire was structured in a manner that prohibited traumatization and was not intrusive. Additionally, participants that needed support and counselling were referred to relevant organizations.

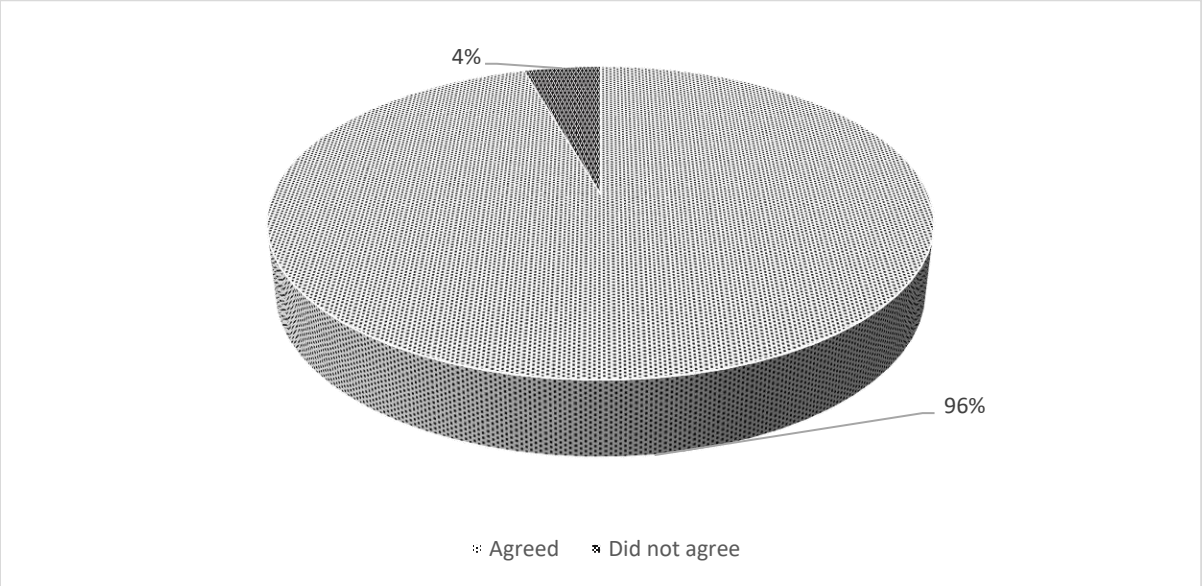
4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented in the following subsections. They begin with some demographic analysis and then move on to more substantive issues. Furthermore, the results from the survey are further discussed with the aid of literature from relevant studies.

Consent to Participate in the Study and Participant's Nationality

Out of 654 respondents, only 29 did not consent to participate in the study. The 4% that did not give their full consent, did not form part of the study (Figure 1). One of the major reasons for the hesitancy in participating in this study can be attributed to the sensitivity surrounding GBV. Moreover, in certain areas, especially in rural KwaZulu-Natal, such topics are off-limit and considered taboo. There is still a lot of stigma associated with GBV in general in South Africa.

Figure 1: Consent to participate in the study



Gender vs Do you believe that you have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children?

Table 1 presents responses from different gender groups to the question: "Do you believe that you have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children? The majority of the respondents (82%) concurred that men have a critical role to play in curbing violence against women and children in KZN (Table 1). Even though men acknowledged that they have a critical role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children, disturbingly some respondents admitted to touching women inappropriately and using physical violence. Additionally, 40% of the participants confirmed that they pass derogatory and sexist comments to women as this is viewed as a norm ("boys will be boys"). Whereas 25% indicated that they beat their partners if they are disobedient, or to prove their manliness or masculinity. Similarly, Jewkes et al. (2015) found that men who adhere to traditional masculine norms were likelier to perpetrate violence against women, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Zinyemba and Hlongwana (2022) revealed that men who conform to rigid masculine norms are more prone to using violence within intimate partner relationships. Furthermore, qualitative research by Abba et al. (2022) illuminated how societal expectations of male dominance and control contribute to normalizing violence against women. The findings of this study are consistent with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and social learning theory, which are utilized to explore the relationship between masculinity and GBV. Bozkurt et al. (2015) emphasized the dominant societal construction of masculinity, which fosters violence, control, and domination over women. This hypothesis accentuates how men frequently use violence to achieve and maintain their authority in social hierarchies, which contributes to the prevalence of GBV. Consequently, social learning theory emphasizes the importance of socialization in creating gender roles and behaviors (Varner et al., 2021). Varner et al. (2021) stated that people acquire and mimic gender-appropriate behaviors in their social context. Thus, males who have been exposed to violent and aggressive masculinity models may be more inclined to commit acts of violence against women. This highlights the need for educational and mentorship programs targeting young boys and men in our society to promote behavioral change and accountability.

Table 1: Gender vs Do you believe that you have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children?

Gender	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Male	11% (71)	6% (40)	81% (506)	99% (617)
Other	-	-	1% (8)	1% (8)
Total	**11% (71)**	**6% (40)**	**82% (514)**	**100% (625)**

Kendall's Test Results

Kendall's tau-b and tau-c tests assess the association between the two ordinal variables in a sample of 625 observations. The tau-b coefficient is 0.052, and tau-c is 0.009, both indicating a very weak positive association. This suggests that as one variable slightly increases, the other also tends to increase, though the association is minimal. The p-value for both coefficients is 0.005, which is below the typical significance level of 0.05. This means the results are statistically significant, indicating that there's a positive association between gender and the respondents' belief that they have a role to play in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children observed in this sample.

Symmetric Measures[c]

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error[a]	Approximate T[b]	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.052	.009	2.799	.005
	Kendall's tau-c	.009	.003	2.799	.005
N of Valid Cases		625			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c. Correlation statistics are available for numeric data only.

Age vs Do you think Men in SA are doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children?

Table 2 depicts the distribution of responses across the different age groups to the question: "Do you think men in SA are doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children?" Across the entire sample (625), the majority of the respondents (402) answered "No" to this question, indicating a general perception across age groups that men in SA are not doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children. The results also reveal that only one respondent amongst those between 55-65 years was of the view that 'men are doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children. Furthermore, the younger age groups (15-24 and 25-34 years) had higher counts of respondents who were not certain as to whether men were doing merely enough to address GBV. It is therefore imperative that interventions and strategies geared towards addressing GBV should target these age groups.

Table 2: Age vs Do you think Men in SA are doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children?

Age group	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
15-24 years	18.3% (13)	15.7% (63)	13.8% (21)	15.5% (97)
25-34 years	49.3% (35)	39.1% (157)	46.1% (70)	41.9% (262)
35-44 years	28.2% (20)	28.9% (116)	23.7% (36)	27.5% (172)
45-54 years	2.8% (2)	11.2% (45)	11.2% (17)	10.2% (64)
55-65 years	1.4% (1)	4.7% (19)	3.9% (6)	4.2% (26)
Above 65 years	-	0.5% (2)	1.3% (2)	0.6% (4)
Total	100% (71)	100% (402)	100% (152)	100% (625)

Chi-Square Test result:

Chi-Square Tests

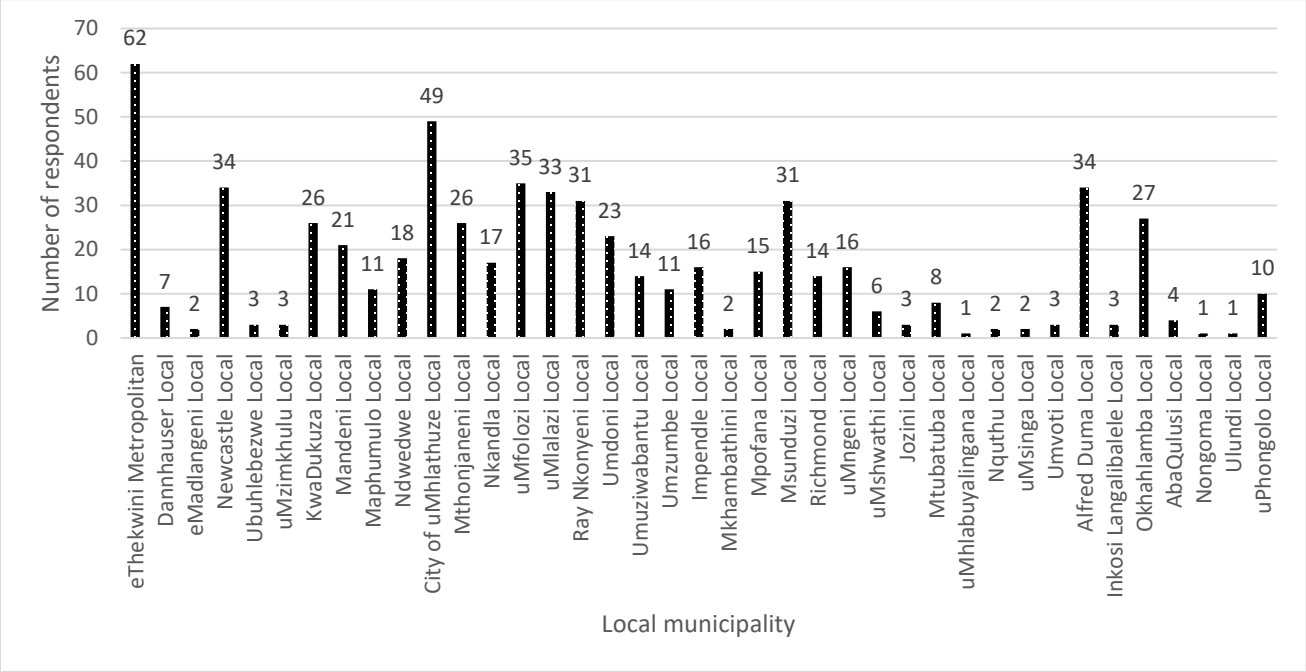
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.654[a]	10	.309
Likelihood Ratio	13.819	10	.181
N of Valid Cases	625		

a. 4 cells (22.2%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .45

Location/ Municipality of the Research Respondents

Male respondents that participated in this study were from various municipalities distributed as follows: 62 from eThekwini Metropolitan; 49 from the City of Umhlathuze local municipality; 35 from Umfolozi local municipality; 34 from Alfred Duma and Newcastle local municipality; 33 from uMlalazi local municipality; 31 from Ray Nkonyeni and Umsunduzi local municipality. Respondents from other municipalities ranged from 1 – 30 (Figure 2). Other than eThekwini metropolitan and Umsunduzi municipality, the rest of the municipality are characterized by high employment and poverty. Furthermore, these municipalities are in townships and rural areas with poor socioeconomic dynamics where GBV is at its highest. Moreover, the Inanda police station (located in a township in KwaZulu-Natal) has the highest number of reported rape cases compared to all other police stations in South Africa.

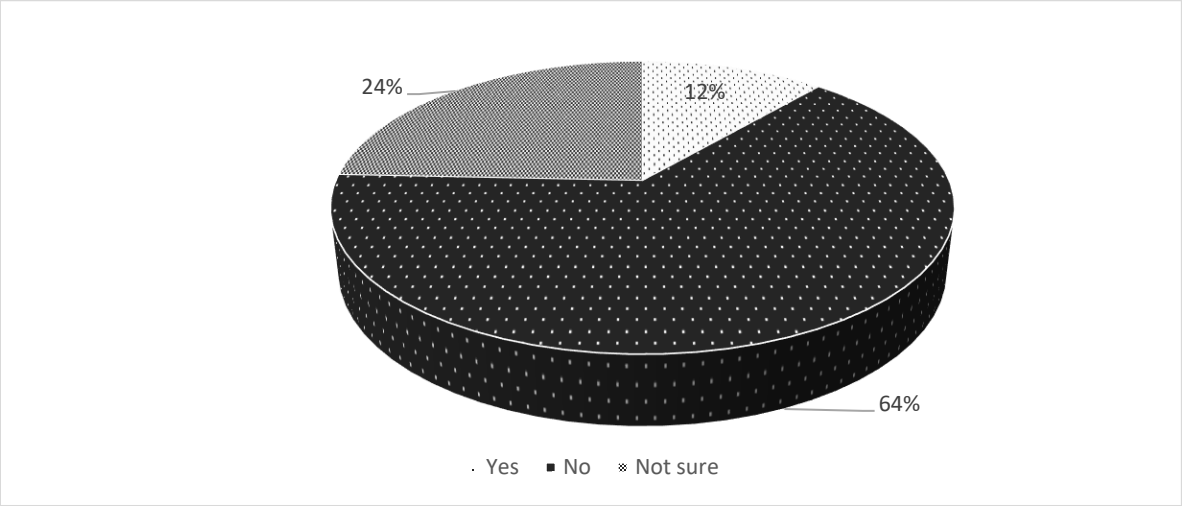
Figure 2: Location of the research participants



Respondent's perspective on GBV efforts and initiatives in KwaZulu-Natal

Most of the respondents (64%) agreed that men are not doing enough to curb the scourge of violence against women and children. This is apparent from the disturbing statistics pertaining to femicide (2930), sexual offense (8759) and rape (41739) (SAPS, 2021). Twenty-four percent (24%) of the participants were not sure whether men were doing enough to address GBV. However, overwhelmingly, 64% agreed that men are not doing enough, whilst only 12% affirmed that men are doing enough to curb the GBV in South Africa (Figure 3). This, on the positive side, means that there is somewhat of an acknowledgment of GBV being a problem in South Africa, while, also, negatively, it speaks to how GBV has been normalized in various communities in South Africa. Govender (2023), confirmed that South African governments struggle to combat GBV due to gendered power dynamics in various cultures, despite existing laws and norms of behavior. Public perceptions and attitudes also contribute to the absence of political and institutional commitment to combating gender-based violence. It is apparent from the findings of the study that GBV has been normalized by society hence, the drastic increase in rape, sexual violence and femicide in South Africa. There is a need for an integrated approach targeting men in addressing GBVF in South Africa.

Figure 3: Responses from men to whether enough is being done to curb GBV



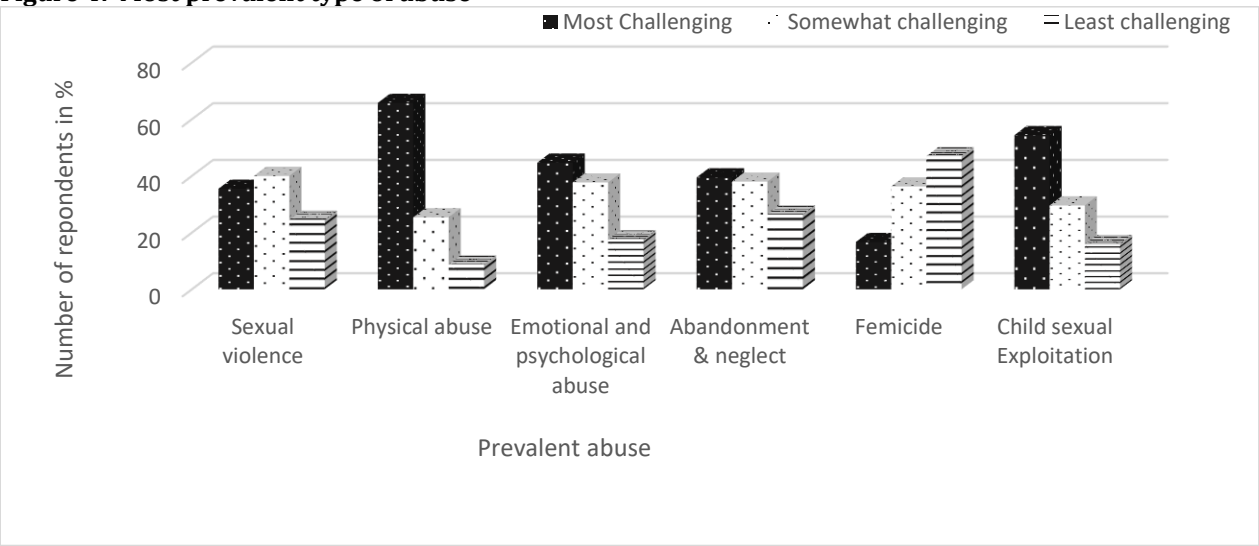
Most Prevalent Type of Abuse

Figure 4 highlights that the most prevalent type of abuse is physical abuse (65.8%). Physical abuse is an intentional act of causing injury or trauma to another person by way of hurting someone physically (Kapur, 2020). Violence in South Africa has been normalized because of the country's traumatic apartheid history. This was confirmed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 1998 report, which stated that decades of Apartheid State-sponsored violence and reactive community insurrection have contributed immensely to a situation in which physical violence is a first-line strategy for resolving conflict and gaining dominance and prepotency for many people (Avruch and Vejarano, 2001). Gobodo-Madikizela (2023) affirmed that pervasive exposure to violence, both within households and communities, has desensitized individuals to its effects, fostering a culture of acceptance and tolerance towards violence. The legacy of apartheid continues to cast a long shadow over South African society, perpetuating cycles of violence and inequality. Understanding the historical context of apartheid is essential for comprehending the root causes of contemporary social problems, particularly Gender-Based violence. By addressing the structural inequalities inherited from apartheid and challenging the cultural norms that perpetuate violence, South Africa can work towards building a more just and equitable society for all its citizens. However, this endeavor requires sustained commitment and collaboration from government, civil society, and the broader community to break free from the shackles of the past and create a brighter future for generations to come.

Another form of abuse that is prevalent based on the findings of this study is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (54.4%). Hill and Diaz (2021) reported that CSE has been found to have a detrimental and long-lasting impact on a victim's physical and emotional well-being. The findings of this study are consistent with the Optimus Study SA, which alluded that sexual abuse of children and adolescents is common: 36.8% of males and 33.9% of girls reported having been sexually abused. Overall, 35.4%, or one in every three teenagers, reported having suffered sexual abuse at some point in their lives (Ward et al., 2018). Moreover, there's been a drastic increase in sexual grooming and exploitation of children in South Africa as depicted in Figure 7. This was also affirmed by the Advisory Notes (2022) that found that in 2021 between 7% and 9% of children aged 12-17 years experienced online sexual abuse and exploitation such as grooming, gifts in exchange for sexual favors, and blackmail. Furthermore, 7% of the surveyed children stated that their intimate photographs were posted online without their permission, while 9% claimed they had been offered gifts or money to engage in sexual acts in person or share sexual images or videos. The perpetrators of the abuse were mostly unknown to the children, and the vast majority of those who experienced exploitation did not report the incidents to adults or authorities. These disturbing findings warrant policy changes and hefty penalties for perpetrators of sexual grooming of children. There is also a need for parents and guardians to monitor children's online activities (social media) to curb the exploitation of children online. Unfortunately, in most cases, perpetrators are rarely punished in South Africa for such obscene acts.

Emotional and psychological abuse was also highlighted as a challenge (44.7%); followed by abandonment and neglect (39.5%); and sexual violence (35.5%). Long-term effects of emotional and psychological abuse can lead to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Sadly, it also continues the cycle of abuse, as many abused individuals become abusers themselves (Stark, 2015). It is worth noting that some respondents indicated that sexual violence (40%); abandonment and neglect (38%), emotional and psychological abuse (37.7%), and femicide (36.3) were prevalent in their communities. Machisa et al. (2011) reported that between 25% and 40% of South African women have experienced sexual and/or physical intimate partner violence in their lifetime. South Africa has a five-fold greater rate of women murdered by intimate partners than the global average (World Bank, 2019). According to Mathews (2004), a woman is murdered by her intimate partner every six hours in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, the study conducted by Malan et al. (2018) discovered that 92.5% of respondents reported being victims of intimate partner abuse in 2017. These statistics show the enormity of the crisis confronting women in South Africa, where women live in constant fear of being raped or killed by their partners. In one of the horrific femicide instances in KwaZulu-Natal a body of a well-known female doctor was found shot and stuffed in the boot of her car, in Imbali Township, Pietermaritzburg, (Miya, 2024). In another occurrence, a 34-year-old woman's body was discarded on the side of a jogging trail at Parkmore's George Lea Park (Luvhengo, 2023). Additionally, the dismembered body of a student was found in a suitcase, while a black refuse bag found next to the suitcase contained some of her other body parts (Shange, 2021). Similar occurrences are recorded daily in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal. This demonstrates how vulnerable and endangered women are in this country.

Figure 4: Most prevalent type of abuse



Causes of Gender-Based Violence

Based on the result of this study respondents believe that a poor and ineffective justice system (65.9%), financial dependency (65.9%), and harmful social gender norms (64.2%) are the main causes of GBV (Figure 5). It is no secret that the justice system sometimes fails GBV victims as most of the offenders are usually released on minimal bail. Furthermore, police stations are designed in a manner that hinders reporting of sexual assault; the inadequate investigations by the police with most of the cases ending up being dropped by the victim due to victimization. (Palermo et al., 2014). Consistent with the findings of this study Nsahlai et al. (2023) found that financial dependency and poverty exacerbate GBV. The results of this demonstrate that there is an urgent need to economically emancipate women, especially at a grassroots level. Women must be empowered to be self-sufficient and must be encouraged to make their own money. Being financially dependent on a man can sometimes put women in compromising situations, such as tolerating abuse from their partners (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Anena and Ibrahim (2020) asserted that the economic empowerment of women could be an effective strategy for addressing GBV.

Transgressing gender norms can be dangerous for women as they are often blamed for the violence men inflict against them, leaving them with very little opportunity to negotiate power dynamics in relationships. In South

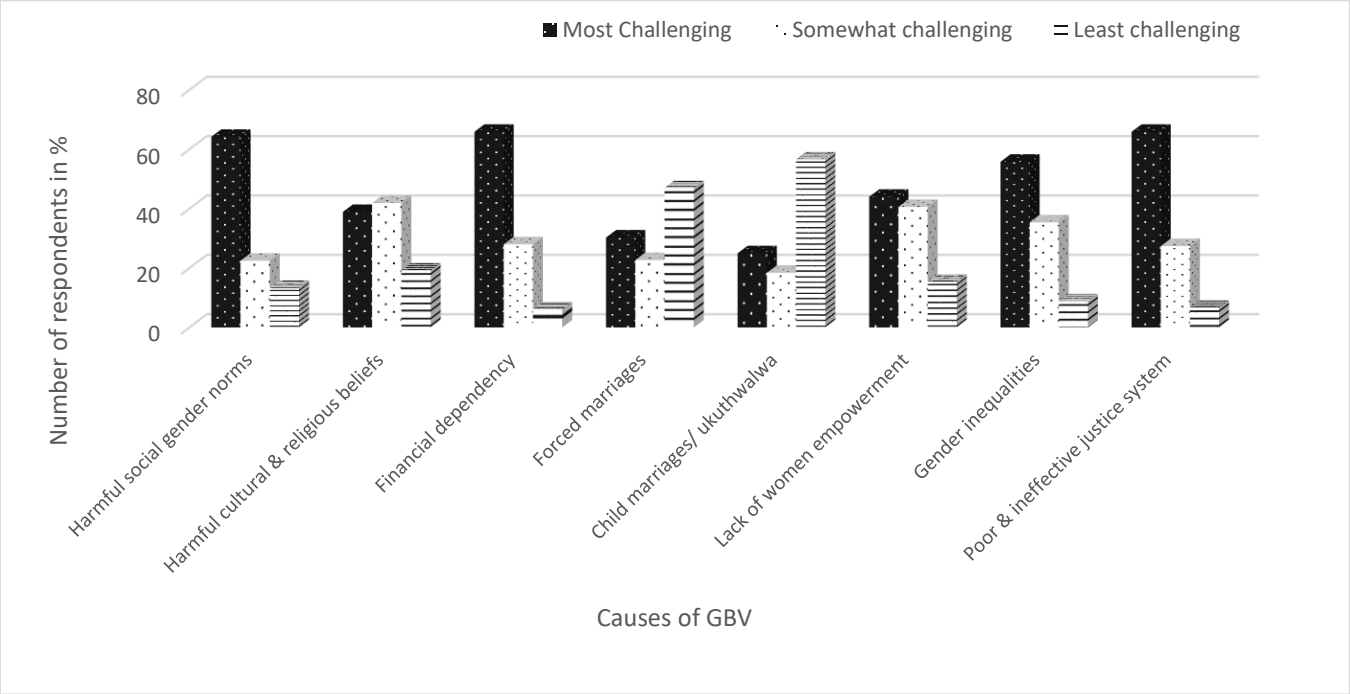
Africa there is often impunity for the perpetrators of GBV especially when it's a family member. Hence, there's a need to dispel myths such as *what happens at home must stay at home*, *my household, my rules,* or *what happens at home is nobody's business*. These ideologies are harmful and tend to exacerbate violence against women since there are no repercussions for the offender. Perrin et al. (2019) concurred that harmful social norms that perpetuate GBV include women's sexual purity, valuing family honor over women's safety, and men's authority to discipline women and children. This observation is consistent with the findings of this study indicating that harmful social gender norms (64.2%) perpetuate violence against women and children. Therefore, changing repressive gender, attitudes and societal norms in our communities should be prioritized. Awareness is warranted regarding the injustice that is taking place in rural areas in the guise of culture and customs, where families of victims accept payments through livestock like goats, cattle, or chicken as a form of compensation when a child has been raped by a family member, neighbor, or someone close and known to the family.

Gender inequalities (55.8%) and lack of women empowerment (44%) were also highlighted as contributing factors to GBV. Consistent with the findings of this study, numerous research (Abrahams et al., 1999; Jewkes, 2002; Sigsworth, 2009, Wood et al, 2008) have identified power imbalances in gender inequality and discriminatory patriarchal practices against women as root causes of GBV. These patriarchal beliefs frequently privilege men over women. There are contradicting views on whether women's empowerment causes or prevents GBV. Incongruent to the findings of this study, Okafor and Abdulazeez (2007) delineated that women empowerment may increase the danger of gender-based violence. They discovered that women who have enhanced livelihood possibilities, a stronger voice, and more decision-making ability may face "backlash" from their intimate relationships, family, and community members. This is mostly attributed to community and household power dynamics, in which gender roles are defined and enforced by social norms that consider men as providers and women as caregivers (Okafor and Abdulazeez, 2007). Modise et al. (2024) asserted that empowerment programs for women can increase their independence and reduce vulnerability to violence. Additionally, during the qualitative interviews, the respondents mentioned that other factors that cause GBV are:

- Jealousy (*isikhwele* in IsiZulu): the respondents were of the view that seeing your partner flirting with another man invokes jealousy to an extent that they begin to be abusive, as they feel threatened in a relationship, and they sometimes get very possessive of their partners which eventually leads to abuse. Buller et al. (2023) confirmed that male romantic jealousy is a common cause of intimate partner violence against women. Their research revealed that male jealousy was associated with controlling behaviors and sexual intimate partner violence. Moreover, controlling behaviors were associated with physical and sexual intimate partner violence (Buller et al., 2023).
- Mindset and power dynamics are the biggest challenges; men need to change their mindset and treat women and children with respect. It does not matter how the women present themselves in terms of how they dress (whether wearing long or skimpy clothing) they should not be perceived as objects of sexual abuse. Most men were of the view that women that dress provocatively are asking to be raped. They further stated that women who wear noticeably short, revealing clothes usually seek attention from men. Similarly, Dzinamarira et al. (2023) indicated that power imbalances, which stem from a patriarchal framework, play a role in exacerbating Gender-Based violence.
- Lack of respect for women and children is a major contributing factor to GBV. Some respondents even affirmed that for a woman to respect you as a man, you must discipline her by beating her up, this averment was very disturbing. These findings illustrate the dynamics of power within homes and in society. Furthermore, Swinford et al. (2000) found that harsh physical punishment in childhood is directly associated with a higher risk of violence against an intimate partner later in life. Abusive parents or background (background of the person), GBV is a learned behavior from being raised by abusive parents or having been a victim of abuse as a child, such incidents subconsciously manifest in a child as he grows up. Men further stated growing up watching their father abusing their mother and sisters, somehow affects them psychologically, and abusing women becomes a norm. Therefore, as young men transition to adulthood, they begin to abuse their partners. According to Wanjiru (2021), social learning theory suggests a child learns not only how to commit violence but also develops positive attitudes toward violence when he or she sees it rewarded. This shows that children who have observed violence or been abused develop harmful conflict resolution and communication behaviors as indicated by the disturbing findings of this study.

- Men feel superior to women. Respondents who took part in this survey stated that cultural and religious norms encourage a man's view that he is superior to a woman, which leads to abuse. Consistent with the results of this survey, Yesufu (2022) affirmed that social norms, religious and traditional values, patriarchy, and gender relationships all contribute to prevailing concepts of masculinity, ultimately undermining women's intrinsic right to exist.
- Women have the biggest role to play in curbing GBV. Some of the respondents stated that women have a bigger role to play due to them being nurturers. They should teach young boys how to behave and treat women. Coulson (2020) advocates that boys should be taught to respect women if the war against GBV is to be won.
- Absent fathers or single parenthood also contribute to GBV. Men lack role models and mentors that could assist them in navigating men-related challenges. Siu et al. (2017) stipulated that parenting programs involving fathers can reduce child maltreatment and Gender-Based violence. Additionally, to create and promote a constructive, nonviolent version of masculinity, men require relevant knowledge, skills, mentoring, and peer support (Hoang et al., 2013)
- Unemployment was also mentioned as a contributing factor to GBV. Respondents indicated that being unemployed as a man is frustrating, especially since, culturally, a man is the head of the family and is supposed to be a provider. Therefore, being unemployed as a man, they feel hopeless, powerless, and frustrated. This frustration then leads to violence and abuse. South Africa has an alarming unemployment rate. Using the expanded definition of unemployed, which includes those who have stopped looking for work, the level of unemployment in SA was 46.6% in 2022 (Stats SA, 2022). This indicates the magnitude of the problem. Similarly, Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP), concurred that the high unemployment rate among South African men contributes to Gender-Based violence because most men who are unable to provide for their families vent their rage on women and children, though this is not a justification for violence against women (IOL, 2019).
- Alcohol and drug abuse are also the biggest contributors to GBV in homes and communities. Respondents indicated that, sometimes, when men are intoxicated, they become violent towards their partners and children. Sometimes, they go to the extent of sexually assaulting and raping women and children. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an increase in domestic violence in South Africa, for which harmful alcohol consumption was a key factor. When the government imposed alcohol restrictions, citizens opted to brew their alcoholic beverages, which further exacerbated GVB. In South Africa, more than 2,000 Gender-Based violence cases were reported to police in the first week of lockdown in March 2020, a 37% increase over the weekly average in 2019. A study by Oxfam (2021) reported that during the pandemic calls to domestic violence hotlines in South Africa increased by 69% during the first month of lockdown (March 2020). The restrictions that were imposed on the movement of persons and goods also made it easier for men to perpetrate violence against women and children without consequences since even the first respondents were not operational. Additionally, Human Rights Watch (2021) confirmed that South African authorities acknowledged a significant increase in Gender-Based violence incidents both during and before the pandemic. Despite commitments, including in a National Strategic Plan, to address Gender-Based violence and femicide, the government has still failed to provide the required financing for shelters and other assistance for victims of GBV. The findings of this study are also consistent with that of Abbey et al (2004) who stated that the primary mechanisms through which alcohol consumption increases the likelihood of sexual violence perpetration are pharmacological and psychological. Overconsumption of alcohol impairs one's judgment and cognitive abilities such as episodic and working memory, abstract reasoning, set-shifting, planning, and judgment (Abbey, 2004; Abbey, 2011). When intoxicated, people focus on immediate, salient, superficial cues rather than distal, covert, embedded cues. The cues that usually inhibit sexually aggressive behavior such as a sense of morality, empathy for the victim, and concern for future consequences are likely to be less salient than feelings of anger, frustration, sexual arousal, and entitlement, especially among men who are predisposed to sexual aggression (Abbey, 2011).

Figure 5: Causes and contributing factors of Gender-Based Violence



Practical Changes and Interventions to Address GBV

Respondents indicated that to address the GBV crisis, men need to take a stand against GBV and hold perpetrators accountable (66.6%). Data obtained from the study points to a contradiction; whilst the respondents acknowledge that men need to take a stand against GBV, they still potentially hold harmful gender norms that legitimize violence against women and children. This contradicting data could be explained utilizing the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. According to Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT), persons who possess contradictory cognitions experience dissonance until they can resolve it by changing their cognitions. Moreover, the results necessitate behavioral changes among men in South Africa to curb the scourge of violence against women and children. There is also a need for educational and mentorship programs for young boys and men on how to treat women and children (64.2%); a stronger justice system that will protect women and children (51.2%) and mobilization of NPOs and community forums to curb the scourge of GBV (Figure 6). Major changes are warranted to deal with GBV in our society, the society that blames the victim and supports the perpetrator (46.6%) and the notion that GBV will go away on its own needs to change (46.1%). Other respondents indicated that sexual objectification of women and children in the media needs to be dealt with if the country is serious about curbing GBV. Table 3 depicts the statistical results for Abuse Types, Causes of GBV, and Interventions to address GBV. Table 3 depicts the Statistical Test Results for Abuse Types, Causes of GBV, and Interventions to address GBV.

Figure 6: Practical changes or interventions to address GBV

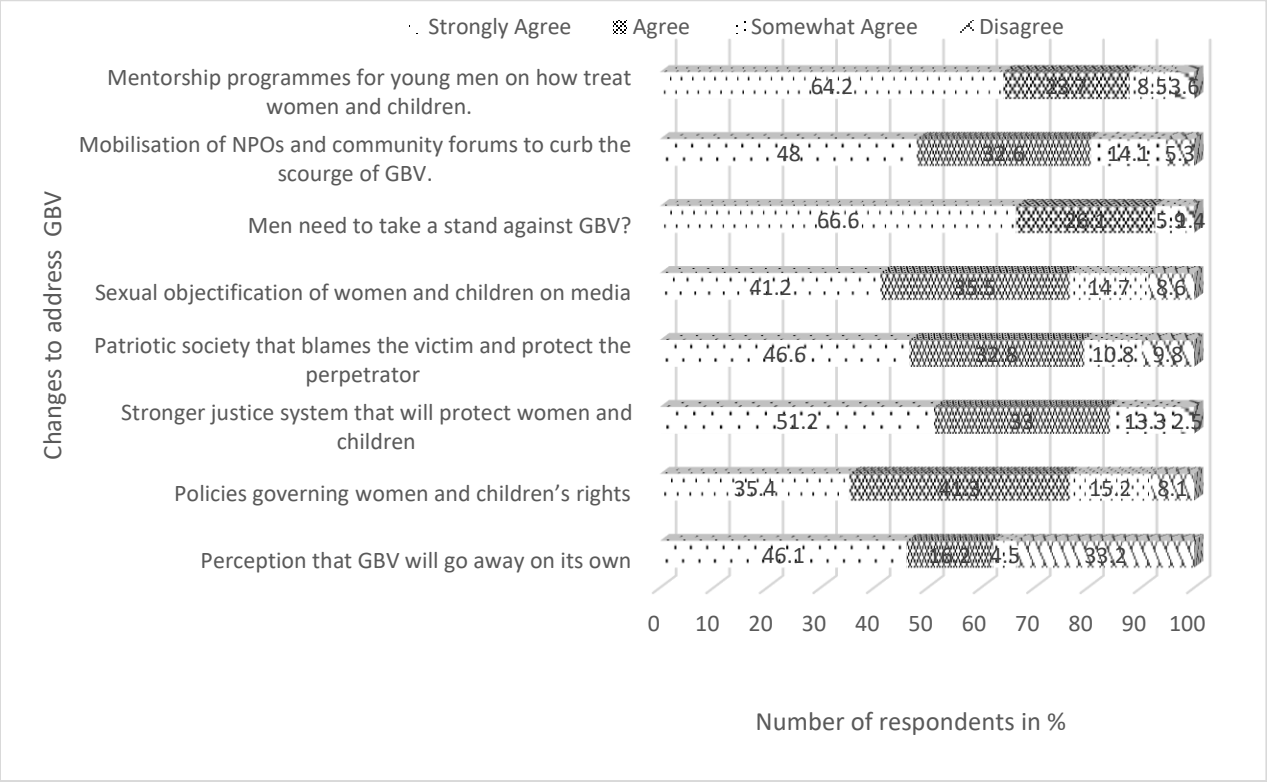


Table 3: Statistical Test Results for Abuse Types, Causes of GBV, and Interventions to address GBV

	Category	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance Level (Asymp. Sig.)
Abuse Type	Sexual violence	3	9.33	0.345	5	0.997 n.s
	Physical abuse	3	8.33			
	Emotional and psychological abuse	3	10.00			
	Abandonment & neglect	3	10.67			
	Femicide	3	9.67			
	Child sexual exploitation	3	9.00			
	Total	18				
Cause of GBV	Harmful social gender norms	3	11.33	0.210	7	1.000 n.s
	Harmful cultural & religious beliefs	3	13.00			
	Financial dependency	3	12.17			
	Forced marriages	3	13.67			
	Child marriages/ukuthwalwa	3	12.33			
	Lack of women empowerment	3	13.00			
	Gender inequalities	3	12.33			
	Poor & ineffective justice system	3	12.17			
	Total	24				

Intervention to address GBV	The perception that GBV will go away on its own	4	17.25	0.597	7	0.999 n.s
	Policies governing women's and children's rights	4	17.75			
	Stronger justice system to protect women	4	16.25			
	Patriarchal society blames the victim and protects the perpetrator	4	17.25			
	Sexual objectification in media	4	18.00			
	Men need to stand against GBV	4	14.25			
	Mobilization of NPOs/community forums	4	16.50			
	Mentorship programs for young men	4	14.75			
	Total	32				

NB: n.s means not significant

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The GBV pandemic in South Africa is rooted in unequal power in gender relations, patriarchy, homophobia, and sexism, amongst other harmful discriminatory beliefs and practices. Such violence is reinforced by the widespread use of drugs and alcohol, and the continued stereotyping of women in the media, further compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and the high unemployment rate in South Africa. Rape is a violent crime and should carry heavy sentences irrespective of whether the perpetrator is a first-time offender or not. However, harsh sentences are rarely given to first-time offenders. Victims are often ashamed to come forth due to the fear of secondary victimization from society. This can be attributed to the poor justice system and a culture of denialism, which protects the culprit and blames the survivors for being victimized. Several interventions can be employed to address the scourge of violence against women and children as highlighted by the findings of this study.

These include but are not limited to: (i) Children, especially boys need to be taught about consent from an early age. (ii) There is an urgent need for GBV awareness and mentorship programs targeting men in general. (iii) Law enforcement needs to train a specific group of officers that will deal solely with rape, sexual assault and any GBV-related reporting and investigations. (iv) Resources must be channeled to increase police visibility, especially in areas with the highest number of GBV-related incidents. (v) Mobilisation of NPOs, places of safety, churches, and community forums is of paramount importance in curbing the scourge of violence against women and children. (vi) A stronger justice system that will protect women and children is necessary for addressing GBV in South Africa. (vii) GBV is a pandemic and a state of emergency, it deserves to be treated with the same urgency as the COVID-19 pandemic. (viii) Policies governing women's and children's rights need to be properly workshopped and implemented and KwaZulu-Natal provincial government needs to develop a detailed strategy and policies on how to deal with violence against women and children. There is a need for additional research that will focus solely on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in South Africa and develop frameworks on how this crisis can be adequately addressed to ensure the safety and security of children.

Limitations of the study

Due to the sensitivity and negative connotations associated with GBV in South Africa, most men were not keen to participate in the study. This affected the project completion date.

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