



**Papers of 11th International Conference on
Gender & Women's Studies 2024**

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Theoretical Aspects of Improving Gender Policy in Uzbekistan

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Abstract.

This article discusses the social, philosophical, economic and political aspects of the gender problem. The measures to address gender equality in Uzbekistan are analyzed. The article says that the basis of all reforms in Uzbekistan is directly related to issues of gender equality. The role and significance of the research methodology for ensuring the equality of women in Uzbekistan is revealed. The issues of improving the social status of women and strengthening their economic rights in the implementation of state programs are considered. The issue of using the full potential of women in all areas of society is considered.

The modern world community is faced with terrorism, military conflicts, which make us think about the instability of the world order, that the world is doomed to make a choice: either the end of evolution, or a new philosophy of coexistence must be sought.

The new philosophy is partnership. It seems, therefore, that the very moment has come when the affirmation of the ethics of relationships in life practice, based on the principle of humanism and humaneness, will more than ever require the concept of gender equality and harmony in Uzbekistan.

What is the goal of development? It is to ensure justice and improve the quality of life. This principle, developed by the world community and enshrined in international documents, is the essence of sustainable development on earth. Note that the emphasis is placed on the development of human potential. Emancipation of the individual, his creative abilities and investments in human capital - this is the tool for achieving the goal of sustainable development.

Is it possible to achieve progress without realizing the need to take into account the interests of both sexes - women and men - in society? After all, the impact and reaction to the same socially oriented reforms may turn out to be different and socially unfair on the basis of gender. The answer is obvious: neither justice nor an increase in the quality of life are possible without the liberation of the individual and his creative potential. The gender strategy in Uzbekistan ultimately serves these goals. The gender strategy of Uzbekistan is the planning of human potential development for the analysis of the main trends in the development of social policy and strategic planning, i.e., the gender strategy is a preventive long-term planning aimed at balanced social development for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people.

Keywords: *state, politics, women, NGOs, gender issues, women's rights, strategy, national program, political processes.*

1. Introduction

Today, the study of gender politics in Uzbekistan is deeply studied in the system of philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science and other social sciences. An important feature of modern society is that there are trends related to changes in the role of men and women in the social space. From the point of view of political science, achieving gender equality is one of the specific indicators of a developed democratic state, and it is one of the main means of ensuring the sustainable development of society. The state's gender policy

affects the entire political process, general social welfare and the state of the social sphere. In addition, addressing gender issues is a priority of state policy.

The implementation of gender policy is becoming especially relevant now because solving gender problems is an important resource for increasing the social well-being of citizens, and social stability, which helps to modernize the statehood of Uzbekistan, the foundations of a democratic state and society, as well as society.

The success of gender policy depends, first of all, on its scientific basis. Gender studies are one of the promising areas of development of social and humanitarian sciences in Uzbekistan, as they serve as a basic condition for society, science, democratization and liberalization. Their relevance is determined by the need to search for new approaches to explain transformation processes and improve political practice.

2. Literature review

2.1 Legal Frameworks for Gender Equality

The "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" adopted on December 10, 1948, and the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan state that "every person has equal rights, regardless of nationality, religion, race, and gender." (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. 2023.) Regarding increasing and strengthening the place of roads in the life of society in our country several reforms are being implemented today. For example, Decree No. PF-5325 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 2, 2018 "On measures to fundamentally improve activities in the field of supporting women and girls and strengthening the family institution", Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 7, 2019 Decision No. PQ-4235 on measures to further strengthen guarantees of girls' labour rights and support entrepreneurship. On September 2, 2019, "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women - girls and men" No. O'RQ-552 and Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On protection of women and girls from harassment and violence", 30 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020 Decision No. 192 of March "On approval of the regulation on the procedure for gender-legal examination of normative legal documents and their drafts" (United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. 2020) and several other laws and by-laws were amended and supplemented. A strategy for achieving gender equality in 2020-2030 is being worked on. In July 2020, at the Commission on Gender Equality of the Republic of Uzbekistan, The Coordinating Council for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship started its work. To increase the confidence of women-girls in having their own opinion and place in society, according to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 486, "Women-girls' public councils" were established in 14 regions and 203 districts (cities). (Shavkat Mirziyoyev. 2020). The fact that these meritorious works cover every sector of our society is a recognition of the high place of women in the life of our society.

2.2 Recent Reforms and Initiatives

Today, more than 240 women are working in executive positions of executive power bodies of the republic and local level. Also, in order to further increase the share of women in public administration, a special program was developed and focused on implementation.

Within the framework of the program, a reserve of more than 25,000 women with management potential in various fields was formed. In order to ensure the rights and interests of women and girls, to effectively implement the state policy on comprehensive strengthening of the family institution, a vertical system was created that penetrates to the lowest level - neighborhood and household. The position of women's activists was introduced in about 10,000 neighborhoods. The participation of women in the decision-making process has increased significantly.

The processes of increasing the economic-political and socio-legal activities of women in the society are considered to be a demand of the time that cannot be delayed. The issue of women is inextricably linked with society, social relations, nations, states, culture and civilizations.

2.3 Impact of Policies on Women's Empowerment

The Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, included goals and objectives to support women and further increase their activity in society. Strengthening the system of support for women, ensuring their rights and legitimate interests, increasing the social, economic, political activity of women and ensuring gender equality are defined as goal 25 in the Strategy "Uzbekistan-2030". The established tasks include measures to increase the socio-political activity of women, continuing the implementation of reforms to support them. In addition, in order to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the period up to 2030, Uzbekistan has identified priority tasks aimed at ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In accordance with the objectives, by 2030 it is necessary to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere, ensure gender equality, the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for them to lead at all levels of decision-making in political, legal, socio-economic and cultural and humanitarian life. In addition, the SDGs provide for the most complete implementation of the principles of gender equality in the process of adopting state programs at various levels of government.

3. Methodology

1. When covering each scientific article, of course, we refer to scientific methods. This scientific article on gender equality currently has a theoretical part. It is possible to achieve high results in practice only by strengthening theoretical knowledge. In this scientific article, the main purpose of using historicity, comparative analysis, comparison, systematicity, problem methods, (Deborah Robinson, 2020) etc. is to study the principle of "gender equality", its development, comparative analysis and comparison of scientific, philosophical, and religious relations concerning it, and the origin of the problem based on systematicity. and aimed at finding a solution.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. **Objectives:** To date, there have been limited studies on gender equality in the workplace in Uzbekistan and, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no studies have been conducted in this area focused on the private sector. The objective of this study is to collect reliable data on the perception, prevalence and impact of gender inequality, harassment,

violence and discrimination in the workplace in the private sector of Uzbekistan, and to understand the extent to which corporate policies and mechanisms support the creation of a gender-equal and inclusive work environment.

2.2. Data Collection: A detailed description of the research methodology is provided in Appendix 1. Data collection was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative method involved collecting primary data from rural women and employees of private sector companies through a questionnaire to (i) determine their perceptions of the prevalence and impact of harassment, discrimination and violence in the workplace and (ii) identify actions taken by employees who experience such incidents. The qualitative method involved interviewing rural women and human resources (HR) managers of companies to (i) gather information on whether companies are mainstreaming gender equality in their work environments and (ii) identify policies, procedures, best practices and support structures developed and used by companies to promote a family-friendly work environment and to prevent and address instances of harassment, discrimination and gender-based violence in the workplace.

Respondents were recruited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. The selection criteria included that the rural women be based in Tashkent city and Tashkent region and have at least 30 employees. The research team aimed to ensure representation of various sectors of the economy. The participating rural women provided their responses to contribute to the qualitative data collection.

2.3. Respondent Profile: A total of 157 urban and rural women participated in the study. The sectors of the businesses involved included (in no particular order) construction, ICT, trade, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, education and financial services. The research team conducted over 100 interviews with rural women to achieve the objectives of the study. Recruitment of respondents for the quantitative survey was conducted in different regions of Uzbekistan. The quantitative survey collected 1,303 individual responses.

3. Analysis and Research

National programs and strategies aimed at ensuring gender equality

It should be noted that the legal basis of gender equality is reflected in international and national legislation. In particular, the equality of men and women was specifically recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

Human dignity is highly recognized in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the issue of gender equality is emphasized. In particular, Article 46 of our Basic Law stipulates that "Men and women have equal rights." (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. 2023.) In this way, in our country women are legally guaranteed to participate in all spheres as active members of society.

In recent years, many state-level decrees and decisions on gender equality have been adopted and implemented. Economic stability is being ensured as a result of comprehensive reforms that are being implemented consistently. Life experience shows that in an

economically stable society, the equality of men and women is at a high level. Gender equality also means social equality. It is not enough to include the necessary provisions in the Constitution and laws to ensure such equality. To ensure gender equality, women and men must have equal opportunities to use legal information resources and participate in state and community management.

As researcher Memesheva L. notes, the differences in wages can be explained by two main reasons: firstly, women are paid less because they themselves choose lower-paid jobs, and secondly, women are less valuable workers due to their lack of experience and qualifications (Memesheva, L. 2020).

Researcher Abdullaev S. claims, the labor market of any country is subject to a greater or lesser degree of uneven distribution of men and women between spheres of activity, i.e. there is gender segregation in the labor market. It can be either sectoral or job-related, inter-firm or inter-sectoral. It is customary to distinguish horizontal and vertical segregation. Vertical segregation is an uneven distribution of representatives of different sexes within the job hierarchy. Horizontal segregation refers to professional and sectoral segregation, i.e. the division of men and women by profession or industry. (Abdullaev S. 2019)

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid special attention to this issue and on March 7, 2019, signed the decision "On measures to further strengthen guarantees of labour rights of women and girls and support entrepreneurship." Also, following the President's decision, the Republican Commission for the Protection of Gender Equality of Women and Girls was established and is operating.

Laws and programs developed at the state level to ensure gender equality are also important. The Strategy of Actions put into practice in our country and the five important initiatives of the President place special importance on ensuring equal rights of women in society and supporting them in every way.

The United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women ("UN-Women") was founded to protect and support the interests and rights of women around the world. In 2010, the establishment of UN Women was recognized by the international community as a great help in fulfilling the UN's main task of establishing gender equality. The work of UN Women is based on the idea that gender equality is an integral part of sustainable development. "UN-Women" organization helps UN member countries to implement international standards for gender equality, and develop and implement relevant laws and programs. The regional representative office of UN-Women works in four countries, namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The office is located in Almaty (Kazakhstan) and has been assisting the government and civil society organizations in issues such as establishing gender equality, expanding women's rights and opportunities, and maintaining peace in the region. (United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. 2020)

Uzbekistan has adopted several legal documents, including presidential decrees and decisions on ensuring women's rights, in particular, on gender equality protecting women from violence and oppression, and strengthening the status of women's entrepreneurship development.

"I think a lot about the stereotype that has appeared in the minds of our people. Usually, we respect a woman first of all as a mother, a guardian of the family fortress. This is certainly

true. But today, every woman should not be an ordinary observer, but also an active and proactive participant in the democratic changes taking place in the country." (Shavkat Mirziyoyev. 2020) According to the President's proposal, a woman was elected to the presidency of the Senate for the first time in the history of the country.

In September 2019, to further improve the legal basis for ensuring and protecting women's rights in Uzbekistan, the Laws "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" and "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence" were adopted. Almost all UN agencies, including the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the International Organization for Migration have submitted their comments and suggestions on these two laws. they gave

As for institutional measures on gender equality, at the same time, a new Committee on Women and Girls and Gender Equality Issues has been established within the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which is engaged in harmonizing international standards in the national legislation on ensuring women's rights and eliminating any form of discrimination. In addition, to further strengthen the guarantees and support of labour rights, to help victims of domestic violence, the Republican Center for the Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Victims of Violence and Suicide Prevention and the Center for Women and Girls Entrepreneurship, "Family" under the Government new structures such as a scientific and practical research Centre were established.

Only 16% of parliamentarians and 5% of ministers are women. In 25 years, not a single woman was appointed to the governorship of the region. Of course, gender equality cannot be achieved overnight. The evolution of women's rights in the United States did not come easily, and the process is far from over. (Deborah Robinson. 2020)

4. Discussion

It is worth noting that today, among 170 districts and 25 (provincial and republican) mayors in Uzbekistan, only 6 women have started working.

According to the World Bank's Women, Business and Law - 2019 study, there are only six countries in the world. These are Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg and Sweden. By almost 100 points, Austria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (97.5 each). Saudi Arabia, UAE, Sudan, Iran and Qatar have the lowest scores of less than 32. Uzbekistan scored 70.6 points. About the same amount in Guatemala and Congo. Among the countries of the former USSR, Uzbekistan took the last place in the study - Lithuania 93.7 points, Tajikistan - 81.8, Georgia - 79.3, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Belarus - 78.7, Kyrgyzstan - 76.8, Kazakhstan and Armenia - each 75.6, Russia - 73.1. A total of 187 countries.

Experts highly appreciate the development and liberalization of the national legal base of Uzbekistan to eliminate the gender problem. Thus, Uzbekistan scored 70.6 points and surpassed all the countries of Central Asia. Experts of the organization analyzed the situation in 187 states. The evaluation was carried out according to 35 criteria in the fields of labour,

property, and family law, taking into account the relevant changes in legislation and reforms. (Samarkand. 2015).

"Today, about 1,400 women are working in leadership positions in the system of state and public organizations in our country. Among our women, there are 17 senators in the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, and 21 deputies in the Legislative Chamber. Women make up more than 23 per cent of people's representatives in local councils. 1 thousand 25 women were elected to the post of chairperson of self-governing agencies in the elections held in May of this year for the chairmanship of citizens' assemblies. The number of women managers working in various enterprises in our country is also increasing. This figure was 44.2 per cent in 2017 and reached 45.3 per cent in 2019. The share of women in health care and social services is more than 82 per cent, in the fields of science, education, culture and art - 72 per cent, in agriculture - more than 45 per cent, and in the industry - 38 per cent. The share of women entrepreneurs in the total number of business entities in our country is 29 per cent. (Nuridinova Sh. (2013).

From this, we can conclude that if the participation of women in the political and social life of Uzbekistan is active, the stable growth of the country's economy will be ensured and the well-being of our country will increase.

Currently, the number of women participating in the country's political life is increasing, they have proven that they can solve their problems on an equal footing with male politicians. If there are many such leaders in the future, then they should strive for their own goals, fight for them and learn to protect their rights, so that they can later protect the interests of the state and their people" (Artikova S. 2018)

5. Conclusion

In our opinion, the greatest effect can be achieved when there is a political will and an active position of the state in the implementation of gender policy. Here, the role of the state as a governing and governing entity of gender politics as a political process is of great importance. In turn, women's organizations are an important organization that unites other institutions of civil society in the field of gender approach and promotion. (M. Akhmedov , R. Azimov , Z. Mutalova , S. Huseynov , E. Tsoi and B. Rexel . 2014)

It is possible to make the following proposals for the further development of gender policy in Uzbekistan.

- 1) Strengthening cooperation between the state and NGOs.
- 2) Introduction of gender education at all levels of the educational process, as well as training of experts on gender policy, in particular, the introduction of special courses into the educational system.
- 3) Coverage of gender issues in mass media and elimination of gender stereotypes, increase in the number of thematic articles, and programs on gender issues.
- 4) To increase the awareness of the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan about the existing gender problems, as well as the activities of various institutions and organizations operating in the field of solving them.

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Developing and Testing an Ecological and Social Role-Based Intervention to Foster Equitable Attitudes Towards Women Among Adolescent Boys: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

This study delineates the developmental and testing process of an intervention designed to cultivate equitable attitudes towards women among adolescent boys. In this effort, the researcher draws upon the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) to provide a conceptual underpinning. The development of this intervention navigated through important stages that involved (a) exploration of existing qualitative knowledge and current state of affairs of attitude towards women and (b) the elaboration of the theoretical grounding of the current status of operant attitudes and scope of their change through theoretical tweaking. This helped to design the intervention sessions and to draw out their likely impact on adolescent boys. This intervention included focused sessions of workshops, classes, short films, videos, group discussions, debates and essay writing. 25 students aged 13 to 15 years were exposed to this intervention weekly for six months. Each session spanned over 45 minutes of a class and half day of workshop. The intervention was delivered in a pre and post experimental setting and the outcomes were measured with the help of Attitude Towards Women Scale (ATWS) administered before and after the exposure.

There was statistically significant effect of the overall ATWS ($t=20.92, df=24, p<.001$), and its sub-dimensions such as domestic ($t=4.54, df=24, p<.001$), educational ($t=13.31, df=24, p<.001$), healthcare ($t=16.32, df=24, p<.001$), employment ($t=5.44, df=24, p<.001$) and societal ($t=13.97, df=24, p<.001$). These results revealed that our newly developed intervention casts its significant influence in the sense that when adolescent boys are properly exposed to its sessions, their set of attitude towards women tends to get more equitable and sympathetic. These findings also help to reconfirm the premise of the theories that inspired to develop this behavior change intervention. The study reports limitations of this pilot work as also its policy implications.

Keywords: Attitude towards women, Behaviour change interventions, Gender equity

1. Introduction

Implementing different ways to reduce negative attitudes towards women (ATW) amongst boys is a pressing societal imperative that holds the key to fostering gender equality and promoting a just and inclusive world (Jenson, 2009; Marmot et al. 2008). Negative attitudes towards women, often rooted in stereotypes, bias, and misconceptions that not only perpetuate discrimination and inequality but also hinder the overall progress of communities and nations (Jamal et al, 2023; Faegin et al, 2018). By addressing and dismantling these attitudes early on, we pave the way for a generation of young men who respect and value women as equals, collaborators, and leaders (Boso, 2017). By promoting empathy, education, and open dialogue, we can challenge harmful beliefs and replace them with a more enlightened perspective that empowers both genders to contribute fully to all aspects of life (Ho, 2017). It's not merely a matter of justice, but also an investment in the betterment of society as a whole, where every

individual has the opportunity to thrive uninhibited by gender-based biases (Cusack, 2013; Smith et al, 2022).

In the pursuit of fostering a more inclusive and egalitarian society, addressing negative attitudes towards women among school-going boys is paramount (Armstrong et al, 2016; Al-Lamky, 2007). A range of interventions have been designed and implemented to tackle this issue, each with varying degrees of success (Fuchs et al, 2003). These interventions have been successfully implemented and are now utilised worldwide such as-

Gender-Sensitive Education Curriculum: Introducing gender-sensitive content in school curriculums is an effective way to promote gender equality, respect, and diverse perspectives from a young age (Trbovc et al., 2015; Strobl et al., 2020). This challenges stereotypes and fosters critical thinking (Kortendiek, 2011). Peer education programs empower older students to engage younger peers in discussions about gender and respect, making the messages more relatable (Gamlath, 2022; William et al., 2013). Role model presentations by accomplished women help challenge stereotypes and inspire boys to view women as equals (Lockwood, 2006; Kennedy, 2022).

Workshops and Interactive Sessions: Interactive workshops that involve activities, discussions, and role-playing scenarios are proven to be effective (Chan, 2012). These sessions encourage boys to examine their attitudes, biases, and language usage (Daniau, 2016; Nikendei et al, 2005). By actively participating in these workshops, boys gain self-awareness and develop a deeper understanding of gender issues (Chen et al, 2023).

Media Literacy Training: Given the substantial influence of media on young minds, media literacy education is crucial (Buckingham et al, 2005). Teaching boys to critically analyse advertisements, movies, and other media content for gender stereotypes helps them discern between reality and media portrayals (Allam et al, 2020; Moorhouse et al, 2020). This intervention encourages them to question and challenge harmful representations.

Involvement of Family and Community: Engaging families and communities in these interventions creates a holistic approach to attitude change (Durlak et al, 2007). When parents, guardians, and community members are on board, the message of gender equality becomes reinforced across various settings, fostering a consistent mindset shift (Casey et al, 2018; Foster-Fishman et al, 2007). **Long-Term Engagement:** Sustainable change requires interventions that are integrated into the education system over an extended period (Han et al, 2005). Consistent reinforcement through annual workshops, guest speakers, and continuous curriculum updates helps embed the values of respect and equality more deeply (Hilton et al, 2021; Noon, 2018; Gilbert et al, 2000).

In conclusion, reducing negative attitudes towards women among school-going boys necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, peer influence, role models, interactive learning, media literacy, family involvement, and sustained effort. By implementing these interventions, society can work towards nurturing a generation of boys who hold respectful and egalitarian attitudes towards women, thereby fostering a more equitable future.

Rationale of the present study. This study incorporates various types of measures to be used in an intervention by analysing the metamorphosis of a negative attitude formation and thus creating a culturally adaptive and interactive (individual level & group level) sessions in order to increase the awareness on women related issues and to unlearn negative attitude towards women amongst adolescent boys.

Objective: Whether there is any change in attitude amongst adolescent boys towards women after exposure to the intervention.

2. Method

The development of this intervention navigated through the following stages:

2.1 Qualitative exploration:

The researcher conducted a qualitative study by interviewing 20 adolescent boys, hailing from different backgrounds and diverse home environments. The main objectives of this formative research were to confirm and expand on the conceptual framework by exploring: (1) outlook on the women in general (2) perception on stigma of working women in a society (3) views on gender discrimination (4) recommendations and suggestion for any change in both male and female.

2.2 Conceptual Framework:

The researcher used the findings from the qualitative research as well as theories- Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner) & Social Role Theory (Eagly) to design a culturally tailored intervention (Pro-Women Intervention) for school going adolescent boys. The intervention includes components to address gender discrimination and prejudice- improving knowledge, changing negative attitudes, and enhancing understanding of women related issues and women related violence in the society.

Guided by Ecological Systems Theory, the intervention began with a focus on the "Microsystem," where participants analysed how their parents and friends shaped their views on women. They explored gender stereotypes and reflected on how deeply they had internalized them. Using Social Role Theory, the intervention then addressed "socioemotional behaviours." Participants discussed helping partners with domestic tasks and engaged in scenarios where traditional gender roles were reversed, sharing their thoughts and opinions.

The Pro-Women Intervention used two models of social change: (1) stigma/prejudice reduction to address boys' negative attitudes, and (2) collective action through group discussions and individual activities like videos. The intervention applied theory-based approaches, including Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977), which explains how behavior is shaped by different environments, and Eagly's Social Role Theory (1987), which links gender stereotypes to societal labor divisions. Students shared experiences in group settings and watched videos reversing women's roles. The intervention aimed to raise awareness of prejudice in a supportive, non-judgmental space.

In total 20 sessions were given with the mix of workshops, short films, debate, open discussions, essay writing and speeches.

2.3 Description of Intervention:

Inputs from the formative research helped in finalising the intervention components (workshops, classes, short films, videos, group discussion, debate, essay writing) and their delivery mode (in-person) and duration (half day for workshops and 45 mins for classes).

The researchers concluded that time and duration are key to attitude change. Many studies on adolescents achieved change in under six months (Keller et al., 2017; Verma et al., 2006). To provide a thorough analysis, they implemented a six-month intervention. Limited to

a 45-minute class due to school constraints, some gender-sensitive workshops, requiring more time, were held after school with special permission.

Workshops: Half-day workshops focused on women's status and safety in India (Schuler et al., 2015; Shields et al., 2011). Using the "Mesosystem" from Ecological Systems Theory, participants engaged in group activities, responding to real-life scenarios depicting violence. These exercises encouraged interventions based on their own perspectives.

Classes: One-way instructional sessions focused on physiological differences between men and women, attitude development, and the influence of society and culture (Kaplan et al., 2013; Rozin et al., 1988). Grounded in Social Role Theory, the sessions explored how societal norms shape gender behaviours and expectations, framing gender understanding within a socio-cultural context.

Short Films: Films on gender discrimination (Vives et al., 2019; Indarli, 2010) were used to explore the "Macrosystem" in Ecological Systems Theory, focusing on social media's role in shaping norms. Gender-sensitive short films highlighted media's influence on attitudes, particularly among adolescents, aiming to raise awareness of these portrayals' impact.

Videos: Videos on gender equality and societal development (Wallis, 2011) explored the "Chronosystem" in Ecological Systems Theory, showing how evolving cultural influences shape young people's attitudes and affect national progress over time. The long-term impact of changing gender perceptions on a nation's development was examined.

Open Discussion: The open discussions encouraged students to share thoughts on women's issues, gender discrimination, and future perspectives (Babu et al., 2009). Guided by Social Role Theory, participants explored gender-sensitive topics with reversed roles, prompting critical reflection on traditional norms and deeper engagement with gender inequality.

Debate: Topics were presented to broaden participants' perspectives (Connell, 2003; Yates, 1997), examining the "Exosystem" in Ecological Systems Theory. Discussions covered government policies, social services, and family networks, highlighting how external environments like institutions and community resources impact individual development.

Essay Writing- The on-the-spot essay activity encouraged participants to express private views on women (Jensen et al., 2009). Grounded in Ecological Systems and Social Role Theory, it asked them to discuss topics like parental influence, peer impact, strategies to reduce gender discrimination, and government policies to improve women's status.

2.4 Outcome Measurement:

The Attitude Towards Women Scale (ATWS), with 63 tailored statements, was designed to measure attitudes toward women in areas such as domestic, healthcare, education, occupation, and societal roles. The statements reflected various theoretical frameworks, including Evolutionary Theory, Psychoanalytic Theory, Social Learning Theory, Gender-role Socialization, and Gender Schema Theory.

Participants were presented with an array of statements and tasked with assessing their degree of concurrence with each proposition. Responses were elicited through a 5-point Likert scale, wherein responses ranged from "strongly agree" (scored as 5) to "strongly disagree"

(scored as 1), with a midpoint denoting "cannot say." Consequently, the manifestation of extreme constructs was discernible through pronounced agreement with certain assertions juxtaposed with vehement dissent towards others.

The scale had passed through various developmental processes which involved item reduction, item analysis, principal component analysis and ascertainment of its reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.846 which indicates a sufficient level of inter-item consistency. The split-half reliability was also calculated, and the Guttman Split-Half Coefficient was 0.789. The entire process of the development of ATWS and its related computation has been explained in a separate following paper.

2.5 Participants:

Several studies have shown that adolescents aged 13 to 15 are heavily engaged with social media and the internet, which significantly influences their perceptions of the opposite gender (Choukas-Bradley et al, 2020; Twenge et al, 2018; Pew Research Centre, 2018; Livingstone et al, 2011). As they are in a critical stage of development, during which they are exploring their own gender and attempting to understand others, they are more susceptible to forming specific gender-related attitudes (George & Odgers, 2015; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). These attitudes can be easily shaped by various external factors, like family setting, peer group, social media, religion and culture.

Therefore, the participants for this pilot study were school going adolescent boys aging 13-15 years. Most of them belonging from different backgrounds and hometowns whilst others from the city where this study took place (Aligarh, India).

2.6 Study setting & design:

Between June 2023 and October 2023, using a one-group pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design, the researcher conducted a pilot intervention among school going adolescent boys in two public all-boys schools in Aligarh (India). These schools were selected on the commitment of the school administrators, support from the university staff and the feasibility of recruiting diverse students belonging from different cities, who are studying in these schools as hostellers.

3. Procedure

During the program orientation, participants were requested to undertake the pre-test (ATWS) before the commencement of the 'Pro-women Intervention'. Following the conclusion of the twenty-sessions focusing on the gender equity, participants were furnished with the post-test (ATWS) and were instructed to complete and submit it. It is noteworthy that the completion of the pre- and post-test was not obligatory for participation in the Pro-women Intervention. In order to ensure anonymity and mitigate respondent bias, identifying particulars were omitted from the questionnaire. Subsequently, the completed questionnaires were utilized for analytical purposes.

3.1 Control of Type-III error:

A Type III error can occur if an intervention's outcomes are misjudged due to implementation errors rather than its design (Faruquie, 2008). To ensure our new intervention's effectiveness, we assessed its validity using context-specific methods (Dane & Schneider, 1998). Adherence to the delivery plan was maintained by following a strict session sequence,

with progressively intensifying concepts. We delivered 20 sessions over 24 weeks to ensure adequate exposure, dividing participants into academic sub-groups (standards VIII, IX, X) for precision. One of the developers of this intervention was the sole implementer, maintaining delivery quality and avoiding bias by monitoring enthusiasm, control, and student involvement. Participant responsiveness was promoted through interactive activities like group discussions, debates, and essays, with encouragement to connect gender sensitivity to their social context.

4. Results

The delivery of intervention in experimental quasi-controlled condition evoked promising results showing impact of our intervention quite reliably and validly. Boys who underwent this intervention showed impressive sensitivity to the intervention and they were able to change their thoughts and perspectives accordingly. Participants' outcomes were measured before and after the delivery of intervention which have been analysed statistically. Paired samples t-test helped to identify the effectiveness of our developed intervention on attitude towards women. Moreover, Cohen's *d* helped to estimate the size of the effect of intervention on the entire outcome as well as its five distinct dimensions. The analysis revealed high effectiveness (and good effect sizes) of intervention on the attitude towards women as a whole $t(24) = 20.92$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 58.32, 95% C.I. of M. D. 48.11 – 68.52, $d = 0.97$; on the dimension: *Domestic* $t(24) = 4.54$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 6.84, 95% C.I. of M.D. 3.37 – 9.94, $d = 0.90$, on the dimension: *Education* $t(24) = 13.31$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 19.1, 95% C.I. of M.D. 16.1 – 22.08, $d = 3.8$, on the dimension: *Healthcare* $t(24) = 16.32$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 11.6, 95% C.I. of M.D. 9.97 – 13.22, $d = 4.40$, on the dimension: *Employment* $t(24) = 5.44$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 6.72, 95% C.I. of M.D. 3.43 – 10.00, $d = 1.50$ and on the dimension: *Societal* $t(24) = 13.97$, $p < .001$, M.D. = 9.12, 95% C.I. of M.D. 7.03 – 11.20, $d = 2.30$.

The statistical analysis demonstrates that our intervention effectively achieves its objectives, with significant improvements in attitudes towards women. Specifically, the intervention resulted in a substantial reduction in mean negative attitudes by 58.32 units. The 95% confidence interval for this mean difference is narrow, indicating a high level of stability and suggesting that these results can be confidently extrapolated to the targeted population. The statistical significance and large effect size further underscore the intervention's robust impact.

Similarly, the mean differences observed across the five dimensions—domestic roles, education, healthcare, employment, and societal attitudes—are statistically significant and exhibit high stability, as indicated by the narrow confidence intervals. The large effect sizes across all dimensions highlight the substantial effectiveness of the intervention. These consistent results across various domains reinforce the reliability and generalizability of our findings to the broader population.

Potential sources of co-variance: This analysis identified factors influencing attitude change, including age, number of siblings, and male and female friends. Only age significantly impacted attitude change. Pre-intervention, age explained variance with $F = 4.43$, $p = .046$, $\eta^2 = .162$, and post-intervention, $F = 5.954$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .206$, showing older participants changed their attitudes more easily than younger ones. These results highlight age as a key factor in the effectiveness of the intervention.

5. Discussion

The Pro-women intervention was formulated with the aim of assessing alterations in participants' attitudes towards women. In accordance with the study hypothesis, the findings indicate that subsequent to engaging in the twenty-session program, participants manifested several favourable shifts in their belief frameworks. Specifically, participants demonstrated markedly elevated levels of dissent towards assertions indicative of acceptance of abuse, externalization of its causation, and propagation of sexist attitudes and stereotypical gender roles pertaining to women post-intervention. Additionally, participants exhibited a notable increase in concurrence with assertions advocating for egalitarian relationships, reduced rigidity in gender roles, acknowledgment of abuse as a volitional act, and endorsement of personal accountability for abusive conduct. These outcomes align with those of a comparable study titled "Short-Term Change in Attitude and Motivating Factors to Change Abusive Behavior of Male Batterers after Participating in a Group Intervention Program Based on the Pro-Feminist and Cognitive Behavioural Approach" (Schmidt et al. 2007).

Our findings suggest theoretical connections between children's social ecology and the formation of their attitudes towards women. The intervention developed for this study is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of attitude formation and dismantling, incorporating elements from multiple theories including ecological systems theory, evolutionary theory, hunter-gatherer society theory, social role theory, and gender schema theory.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory suggests that youth behavior and well-being are shaped by interconnected social systems. Social role theory highlights how adolescence, marked by physical, cognitive, and social changes, affects interactions with family, peers, and teachers, influencing autonomy, sexuality, and identity. Gender schema theory emphasizes that cultural norms shape gender perceptions. Hunter-gatherer society theory points to early human cooperation and egalitarianism, fostering balanced gender attitudes. Evolutionary theory explores how reproductive and social bonding pressures shape gender roles and men's attitudes toward women.

Theory-based social interventions can drive significant behavioural change and address complex societal issues (Meyer, Louder, & Nicolas, 2022). By applying established frameworks, these interventions use strategies proven to be effective (Haynes et al., 2018; Gonzalez, Butler, & England, 2015). Such approaches shift entrenched attitudes toward gender equality by targeting cognitive and social processes, leading to improved views of women (Sheehy, 2022; Furnis-Lawrence, 2012). This evidence-based method enhances practical impact in real-world settings, making it a valuable tool for addressing societal challenges (Owen, Watkins & Hughes, 2022).

Our intervention shows strong potential for fostering social change by effectively modifying entrenched attitudes towards women. Grounded in theoretical frameworks, it led to statistically significant improvements, including reduced acceptance of abusive behaviours and more egalitarian views on gender roles. These results demonstrate the intervention's ability to challenge social norms, facilitating shifts in individual behavior and promoting a more equitable society. Its success highlights the potential for scaling and replicating the model to address gender disparities on a larger scale.

6. Limitations faced during the intervention delivery:

During the pilot intervention, researchers faced limitations that may have affected the true impact on the targeted population. The primary issue was a small, homogeneous sample, which limits the generalizability of findings to a diverse population. Conducting the intervention in a controlled setting may have removed participants from real-world complexities, affecting its practical applicability. Self-reporting bias could have led participants to conform to perceived expectations rather than express their true beliefs. External influences, such as family beliefs, peer pressure, and social media, may counteract the intervention's effects. Additionally, resistance to change could hinder participants from altering deeply held beliefs reinforced by cultural norms. Lastly, the focus on specific attitudes towards women might overlook others, resulting in partial attitude change. However, our outcome measures covered most aspects comprehensively. To enhance the intervention's effectiveness and scalability, it's important to address these limitations.

7. Policy Implications:

The intervention aimed at reducing negative attitudes towards women among adolescents showed significant policy implications for educational and social programs promoting gender equality. Its effectiveness underscores the need to integrate gender-sensitive content into school curricula, prompting policymakers to mandate such programs for early cultivation of respect and equity. Involving families and communities is also crucial for reinforcing gender-equitable attitudes. Policies should foster collaboration between schools, parents, and community organizations to create a supportive environment for lasting change. Given the success of diverse methods like workshops, peer education, and media literacy training, a multifaceted approach to educational reform is recommended. Finally, ensuring the longevity and scalability of these interventions requires long-term funding, continuous monitoring, and evaluation to embed gender equity values within the educational system and society.

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Women's Contributions to Innovation in Brazil: A Survey of Patent Applications from 1873 to 1910

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to present a survey of the inventions that generated patent applications filed in Brazil, from 1873 to 1910, and that were requested by Brazilian women. The methodology was to search for information in requests for industrial privileges that make up the National Industrial Archive Brazilian Privileges Collection. The information collected was: name of the inventor, country of domicile, year, name of the applicant, description of the invention, object of the invention, patent grant number. From this research, 38 inventions were identified in 10 areas: agriculture and animal industry/food/machines and engines/transport/chemical industries/textile and clothing industries/industrial arts and domestic economy/various industries; sanitation, lighting, heating and cold industrial/medicine, surgery, pharmacy and prophylaxis. The area with the highest number of patent applications was the textile and clothing industry, with eight applications. The years with the highest number of applications were 1903, 1906 and 1907. In the majority of applications, the inventors themselves were the applicants for industrial privileges. In our analyses, we concluded that the number of requests for industrial privileges presented by women in the period in question was small, but very diverse, comprehensive and coincident with the inventions of the time. In this sense, this set provided us with relevant information to help understand the situation of Brazilian women in that period.

Keywords: *women inventors, patents, industrial privileges*

1. Introduction

The discrimination against women in societies in general, particularly inside the labour market, is a fact over which there is no doubt. It manifests itself through salary distribution, unemployment rates, and the spread of the myth that women are not suitable for certain areas of knowledge, such as engineering and physics, and, consequently, for the field of industrial creations. In books and documentaries on scientific or technological inventions, the ones attributed to women are always fewer than those attributed to men, but this does not mean that it is true that women are not suitable to work in technical areas, such as the creation of technologies. As inventions are the result of necessities, it is impossible to imagine that women are not the inventors of many artifacts that make up our daily lives. Over time, women have always been present as inventors in almost all areas, technical or not, and if their presence is smaller in numbers than men's, this is certainly due to the limits imposed by societies, such as not giving women the same recognition given to men for any work outside the domestic environment.

This discrimination is historical and, therefore, rooted within societies. In Brazil's case, it is manifested in several ways, including the fact that it was only in 1879 that the first Brazilian woman was able to attend higher education, by Decreto Lei nº 7.247/1879, while men were

able to attend higher education in 1808 (Neves and Martins 2016). Brazilian women were only able to vote for the first time in 1932 (Marques 2019), while men were able to vote in 1821 (Agência Câmara 2008). From the Portuguese imperial period until the beginning of the 19th century, laws were different for women and men who were accused of killing their partners. The laws provided for the conviction of married women considered adulterous, while men could even kill their wives if they caught them in the act, using the legitimate defense of honor as an argument (Ramos 2012). Currently, Brazil is the fifth country in the world ranking of femicides (Cerqueira and Bueno 2024), and, in 2023, 1,463 Brazilian women were victims of femicide, which is equivalent to a rate of 1.4 women killed for each group of 100 thousand women (Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública 2024). Regarding current employment and wage rates, data indicate that in the last quarter of 2023, in Brazil, the percentages of unemployed were 45.7% men and 53.4% women. In the last quarter of 2023, the average income among men was 3,233 reais, while the average income among women was 2,562 reais (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE 2024).

In 2022, the Brazilian population was 203,080,756 people, of which 104,548,325 were women, and 98,532,431 men. These numbers are equivalent to 51.5% of women, and 48.5% of men (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) 2023). Despite the number of women in the Brazilian population being greater than the population of men, the proportion of seats occupied by women in office in the Chamber of Deputies in 2023 was only 19.7%. In the Brazilian Federal Senate, out of the 81 existing seats, 15 are occupied by women and 66 by men (Senado Federal 2024).

To talk about the history of Brazilian women means to put together a large shawl, formed by a myriad of aspects, situations and events that involve women from the original Brazilian peoples, but also entail European women who came with the Portuguese colonization, the African female population that was brought to the country as enslaved people, and women from other migrations, such as the Japanese and Lebanese, and all the descendants of these women, from different social classes and ethnicities that make up the Brazilian women of today.

In this sense, this article intends to make its contribution to history by presenting a survey on the participation of Brazilian women in the field of technological inventions, between 1873 and 1910. More precisely, the research focused on technological inventions created by Brazilian women who requested the rights of industrial privilege over their inventions to the Brazilian State. "Industrial privilege" is a document which, at the time, was the equivalent to the current patent, that is, a document which guaranteed its owner the right to economically exploit their invention exclusively, for a determined period of time and in the country where the industrial privilege was requested. We set off from the point of view that the requests for industrial privileges made by women inventors from 1873 to 1910 demonstrate their perspectives over women's interests, concerns and needs regarding the technological artifacts of society at that time.

1.1. A snippet of Brazilian women's situation in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century

Until the end of the Portuguese Empire (1822) Brazil was a rural country, and it was from the middle of the 19th century that the country began to change this situation. According to

D'Incao (2004), in the 19th century, Brazilian society underwent important transformations, considering that during this period it consolidated and developed capitalism and increased urban life in some regions, creating new forms of interaction within society. In that century, Brazil experienced the growth of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois mentality, which changed family and domestic life, reorganizing the time and activities of bourgeoisie women and generating work for poor women, as laundresses, ironers, seamstresses, ironers, among other low-skill activities.

A new woman emerged from the bourgeois family, marked by the values of intimacy and motherhood (D'Incao 2004). The ideal bourgeois life at the time entailed a solid family environment, “[...] a welcoming home, educated children and a wife dedicated to her husband, children and free from any productive work.” (2004, p. 223), with marriage being the only opportunity for women to be productive. As in the rest of the world, the main functions of Brazilian women were motherhood and caring for the family and their homes. They were responsible for smoothly running domestic life, combined with the roles of mother and wife, and working outside the house did not fit into this structure. Carvalho (2020) draws attention to the fact that keeping women at home was not just an aspect of the bourgeois ideology trying to engage women in the domestic routine, since keeping them at home also meant not having them in the job market, therefore reducing the competition for work positions.

According to Carvalho (2020), the abolition of slavery (1888), the intense immigration of the time and the rural exodus formed a mass of laborers in Brazilian urban centers, variable and poorly absorbed by the most developed sector at the time, the third sector. For a poor woman, getting a job as a maid would mean she could have some stability, she'd have a place to live without having to pay for it, in addition to being guaranteed a daily meal. Also according to Carvalho (2020), in 1870, in Rio de Janeiro, 71% of women were servants, which is the equivalent to 34,000 women. They worked as maids, pages, wet nurses, cooks, scullery maids, housekeepers, water carriers, laundresses, ironers and seamstresses. In 1906, 76% of working age women were servants, which corresponded to 77,000 servants. According to Monteleone (2019), women's jobs at the time, when they were paid, were underpaid and done in degrading conditions.

In addition to being servants, according to Dias (1995), many women worked part shifts as salespeople in greengrocers or sewing for customers. Most of these women were enslaved people who worked for other women (Dias, 1995). According to Monteleone (2019), the enslaved women who worked inside the house, called “mucamas”, almost always had to know how to sew, at least the basics, such as hemming, sewing on buttons and making small patches.

With the growth of urban centers, a new type of specialized female work emerged, the work of making clothes in fashion ateliers and stores, saleswomen, dressmakers and fashion journalists (Carvalho 2020). According to Monteleone (2019), dressmakers and fabric stores would copy the European models that arrived in Brazil, mainly through publications for women. Clothing-related work grew in importance, as it acquired another meaning beyond covering the body and being an ornament. According to Souza (1996), the style of dressing in the 19th and early 20th centuries was part of a social distinction system, visibly noticeable, which demanded a large amount of time and workers to make and care for the clothes and accessories. This kind of social distinction required greater investments in wardrobe, especially

women's wardrobe. According to Graham (1992), a common habit among wealthy families was the presence of resident and free seamstresses at home.

In Brazil, from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, many women's publications emerged, such as *The Fashion Mail* (*Correio das Modas* - 1839), *The Fluminense Mirror* (*O Espelho Fluminense* - 1843), *The Old Ladies Newspaper* (*Jornal das Senhoras* - 1852), *The Pretty Sex BreakTime* (*O Recreio do Bello Sexo* - 1856), *The Family Archive* (*Arquivo das Famílias, Jornal das Famílias* - 1863), *the Family Library* (*Biblioteca das Famílias* - 1874), *the Kiss* (1900), which according to Hahner (1978), would also bring reports about female dissatisfaction among the subjects covered at the time. Coelho and Baptista (2009) cite the *Old Ladies Newspaper*, founded in 1852, which questioned the way married women were treated by their husbands, and demanded that they be given value as wives and mothers.

Regarding the educational training of Brazilian women, according to Louro (2004), the last decades of the 19th century pointed to a need for formal education for women, due to the industrialization and modernization of society, the adoption of new hygiene habits in the families and the building of young people's citizenship. According to this author, "The concern to distance the concept of work from all the burden of degradation that was associated with it due to slavery, and to link it to order and progress, led the leaders of society to enlist women from the low classes" (Louro 2004, p.447). Then, teacher training schools were created. These schools were opened to serve young people of both sexes, although the regulations defined that girls and boys should study in separate classes and, preferably, in different shifts and schools. When teacher training schools were created, the intention was that they would train as many men as women in terms of numbers, but this did not happen, as these schools received and trained more women than men.

According to Martins (2002), the first higher education schools created in Brazil date back to 1808. They were created due to the Portuguese royal family's arrival in the country, bringing along young people of age to attend higher education. They were the schools of Surgery and Anatomy, in the city of Salvador in Bahia, of Anatomy and Surgery, in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the Navy Guard Academy, also in the city of Rio de Janeiro. However, women could not attend these schools and were only able to do so at the end of the 19th century, in 1879, when the last Portuguese emperor of Brazil signed a law allowing women to attend higher education courses (Martins 2002). The first Brazilian woman to graduate from a higher education course was Rita Lobato Velho Lopes, in 1887, she attended and graduated at the University of Medicine of Bahia (Bandeira 2013).

The period from the second industrial revolution to the 20th century was full of scientific discoveries and technological inventions that transformed humanity's way of living, but unfortunately, these two fields are considered male prerogatives and this reality is reflected in the number of requests for patents (or industrial privileges) from that same period.

2. Material and Method

This article's research is a continuance of the research developed by Silva (2019), who identified in the Collection of Industrial Privileges (*Arquivo Nacional* 2013) requested in Brazil, from the period 1873-1910, requests that had women as the inventors of technological artifacts. This is one of the Collections of the Brazilian National Archives.

2.1. About the Industrial Privileges (IP) Collection of the Brazilian National Archives

The origins of this Collection date back to 1882, when the National Archives became the Brazilian national body responsible for receiving patent applications filed in the country. At the time, they were called industrial privileges (IP). This Collection brings together the requests for industrial privileges (IP), filed in Brazil, for new inventions or processes, in the period from 1873 to 1910. It contains 9,301 IP requests.

Industrial privilege is the document equivalent to the current patent, which is an instrument of Industrial Property, an area that deals with the law regarding industrial inventions. It is a document provided by the State, which grants legal rights to the owners (holders) of the inventions. These are exclusive rights to use the invention economically, for a specified period of time, in the country where the right was requested. Thus, it guarantees its holders the right to produce the invention exclusively, to use licenses, whether for manufacturing the invention, for export/import, loans or other purposes. Currently, in most countries, including Brazil, the length of a patent is twenty years, and after this time the invention becomes public domain. A patent can refer to either a new creation or the improvement of an existing technology.

The National Archives' Collection of Industrial Privileges, covers several areas of knowledge and is representative of the concerns from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century: 70% of requests for industrial privileges are directed to the agricultural sector, covering inventions linked to transport, storage of production and pesticides; 20% are related to industries; and 10% cover general topics related to medicine, health hygiene, food, clothing, packaging, advertising, construction materials, entertainment, graphic arts, lighting, decoration, furniture, household items and education. The Collection's documentation categorized the inventions in 15 groups, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: The 15 groups of the National Archives IP Collection

1. Agriculture and animal industry;	9. Textile and clothing industries;
6. 2. Food;	10. Industrial arts and home economics;
3. Mines and metallurgy;	11. Various industries;
4. Machines and engines;	12. Construction;
5. Transportation;	13. Sanitation, lighting, heating and industrial cooling;
6. Scientific instruments and calculating devices;	14. Medicine, surgery, pharmacy and prophylaxis;
7. Electricity;	15. Military and naval art.
8. Chemical industries;	

The research topic of this article is the continuance of a research developed by Silva (2019), who identified in the Collection of Industrial Privileges requested in Brazil, in the period 1873-1910, requests that had women as inventors of the artifacts. Out of the 9,301 requests, the 2019 survey identified 73 industrial privilege requests whose inventors were women. These women were spread across 12 countries.

2.2. Research Methods

Out of the 73 requests made by women identified in the National Archives Collection, Silva's research (2019) identified a set of 41 requests with Brazilian or foreign women who resided in the country as the inventors. In the present research, only 38 of these 41 requests were considered, because in 3 of them, the names in the registry are common names which can be used for both genders in foreign countries. Another observation refers to the fact that in this research we are considering and calling all inventors resident in the country Brazilian women, whether they are Brazilian or foreign. The first stage of the research was classifying the requests by Brazilian women inside the 15 knowledge groups established by the National Archives Collection. The second step was, based on requests from Brazilian inventors, to create a database with the following items from each request:

Name of the inventor, country of residence, year, applicant name, description of the invention, subject of the invention, granted patent number. The applicant is the one who files the request, and may be the inventor themselves or an attorney; the description presents a brief and standardized description of the object invented; the subject is the topic of the invention; the granted patent refers to the number assigned to the granting of the privilege.

All data was collected directly from the IP Collection. In order to classify the inventions of Brazilian women in the areas of knowledge, the 15 areas established in the Collection's documentation were used as the areas in which all IP requests from the Collection are located (table 1). From this base, the third and final step was extracting information through combinations of results.

3. Results and Analysis

- Distribution by knowledge groups: The 38 IP requests from Brazilian female inventors are distributed across 10 of the 15 groups identified by the National Archives Collection. Table 2 shows the number of requests per group.

Table 2: Quantity of requests per group

Agriculture and animal industry (1)	Textile and clothing industries (9)
Food (5)	Industrial arts and home economics (0)
Mines and metallurgy (0)	Various industries* (7)
Machines and engines (5)	Construction (0)
Transportation (1)	Sanitation, lighting, heating and industrial cooling (1)
Scientific instruments and calculating devices (0)	Medicine, surgery, pharmacy and prophylaxis (4)
Electricity (0)	Military and naval art (0)
Chemical industries (5)	

- Subjects and number of requests: 20 different subjects were identified within the Brazilian women's IP requests. These and their quantities are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Subjects and number of requests

Sugarcane Molasses Brandy (2)	Refrigerator (1)
Tile Decoration (2)	Loom Machine (1)
Apparatus for manufacturing acetylene gas (1)	Erysipelas Medication (1)
Fishing Apparatus (1)	Lung Medication (1)
Cigarettes (1)	Hair Medication (2)
Machine to extract sodium chloride (1)	Garment Mold System (1)
Vest for ladies (8)	Mixture against metal oxidation (1)
Game (Dominoes) (1)	Cassava scraper (1)
Sliding staircase (1)	Coarse salt purification process (2)
Water Sterilization Machine (1)	Car for passengers in a train (1)
Manufacture of pins and brooches (1)	Steam vulcanizer (1)
Soap making (3)	Portable Rolling Kiosk (1)
Iron (1)	

- Annual distribution: This is the distribution of requests throughout the period covered by the Collection. It is observed that, although the Collection covers the period from 1873 to 1910, the first request from a woman residing in the country was only made in 1881. The distribution of requests over the period of 1881 to 1910 can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Annual distribution of IP requests

1881	1885	1889	1892	1893	1894	1897	1899	1900	1901	1903	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910
1	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	4	2	4	4	1	1	1

- Granted Patents: Out of the 38 IP requests from Brazilian inventors, 26 of them got a patent, that is, the right to exclusively use the economic benefits of their inventions.
- Applicants: In 22 of the 38 applications, the inventors themselves were the applicants. 16 requests were made using power of attorney, which could be individuals (10) or legal entities (6). There were no women among the lawyers using power of attorney.
- Shared inventions: In 5 of the 38 applications, the inventions were shared. In 2 of these 5 applications the inventors were two women, and in the remaining 3, the inventors were always a woman and a man. In the remaining 33 applications, the inventors were always a single person, a woman.
- Subjects and number of requests: Among the subjects, the one that had the highest number of requests was the ladies vest, with 8 requests, followed by soap making (3) and with the same number of requests, brandy items (2), tile decoration (2), hair medicine (2) and salt purification process (2).

When analyzing the results, we highlight that:

The total number of requests from Brazilian female inventors found in the research is very small, given the set of requests filed in Brazil which are part of the Collection (9,301 requests), only 38 were made by Brazilian female inventors. On the other hand, we can observe that, regarding the concerns and interests of Brazilian inventors expressed in these requests, their creations cover almost all areas of the Collection's set of requests (9,301 requests). Of the 15 knowledge groups identified throughout the IP Collection (table 1), requests from Brazilian women were distributed across 10 of these groups. They are:

Agriculture and animal industry/food/machinery and engines/transport/chemical industries/textile and clothing industries/industrial arts and home economics/various industries; sanitation, lighting, heating and industrial cooling /medicine, surgery, pharmacy and prophylaxis.

The ones left out: Mines and metallurgy; Scientific instruments and calculating devices; Constructions, Electricity and Military and Naval art. Out of this 5 group set, one of them, military and naval art, was a very male focused universe at the time, consequently, we can even consider that out of 14 groups, women only did not submit requests to 4 of them. This fact shows that those women were attentive to the needs and interests of society at the time in the field of technology.

Therefore, the diversity of interests among Brazilian inventors is evident, because, despite the number of applications being small compared to the total number of applications in the Collection, these inventors submitted applications to 10 of the 15 areas of the Collection.

As for the annual distribution, this portrays, in another way, the low presence of women as inventors of technological artifacts. The highest number of requests per year was 4, which is a very low result. The years with the highest number of requests were 1903, 1906 and 1907.

It should be noted that the first request does not coincide with the starting date of the Collection, which covers the period from 1873 to 1910, and the first request filed by a Brazilian woman was in 1881.

Regarding the subjects and the amount of requests, the relationship between the number of subjects and the number of requests highlights the characteristic diversity of interests in the universe of women at that time (table 3). Among the subjects, the one that had the highest number of requests was the vest for ladies, with 8 requests, which is in line with what is presented in the literature when it points out that in the period relating to the Collection, the clothing sector generated growth of opportunity in the job market. In smaller numbers, but also a fundamental accessory to another work activity that was typical of women at the time, that of laundresses, soap making appears, with 3 requests.

Another result refers to the granting of the patent. Of the 38 IP requests filed by Brazilian inventors, 26 of them got a patent, that is, the right to exclusively use the economic benefits of the patent.

Another interesting aspect that can be observed in the requests refers to a certain autonomy of those women inventors, since the majority of IP requests were made without attorneys as intermediaries, that is, without men representing them.

Another aspect refers to the shared inventions. Different from nowadays, when having more than one inventor is predominant in patent applications, in the past, judging by the requests for industrial privileges from Brazilian inventors, this was not a dominant practice. One aspect that can help explain this situation is the fact that nowadays, inventions involve more knowledge, have become more complex, and this favors an increase in the number of inventors involved.

As limitations of this research, I would like to highlight the following facts: 1) granted patents were considered those whose documents contained a patent number, and ungranted patents were those that did not list a patent number. With this in mind, I would like to point out that there was no field indicating “non-granted patent.” 2) As previously noted in the section on materials and methods, 3 applications were removed from the set of 41 patent filings with female inventor names, as the names could be considered unisex. 3) In this research, Brazilian inventors were considered to be women residing in the country, since the source consulted did not list the nationality of the inventors.

4. Conclusions

In the survey of patent requests that are part of the Collection of Industrial Privileges of the Brazilian National Archives, only 38 applications from Brazilian inventors were found. This result confirms the disparity between women and men in terms of relevant activities which took place outside the domestic environment in society at the time. The majority of patents during the period studied had the inventors themselves as their holders (owners), an aspect that is different from what currently occurs, when the majority of patents have companies as holders. That said, we must think about what it meant for a woman from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century to have exclusive rights over a technological creation, which, in other words, meant having the right to produce it exclusively or license it for others to produce and commercialize their inventions. Brazil is a country with many gender inequalities and in the past the situation was even worse, which certainly helps to explain the small number of patents filed by Brazilian female inventors. Developing an invention in such a way that a patent could be filed for, required, at least, financial resources, access to equipment, access to studies and the possibilities of carrying out efficiency tests, and these were not items within the reach of Brazilian women at the time, who were still in their infancy in the feminist movement back then.

For this reason, even though the number of inventions was small, we consider that in the context of Brazilian society at the time, the identified set of patent requests made by Brazilian women says a lot about these women's potential, as the requests showed a great diversity of interests and the autonomy that they had due to being able to request their rights over their own inventions.

As for future studies, my suggestions refer to a comparative study between the knowledge groups in patent applications by Brazilian women and men, with the aim of enabling analyses of different interests. In addition, another suggestion refers to an analysis of the inventions by Brazilian women themselves, with the goal of identifying which of these inventions already focused on the sustainability of natural resources.

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Challenging Stereotypes: The Role of Media in Promoting Gender Inclusivity in India

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Abstract

Swayam, a feminist, women's rights organization has been working relentlessly to end violence and discrimination against women and girls since 1995. We provide direct support to women survivors of violence, their children and families through a range of interventions and support services. We also actively work with individuals, families, institutions, State agencies, community-based organizations and educational institutions to address structural patriarchal mindsets and stereotypes through a range of preventive interventions.

Our preventive work aims to create a gender-just lens at various levels of society. We use media in the form of short films, spots, radio and television broadcasts, newspaper coverages, and social media awareness to shape societal perceptions. It is hence important to look at gender and sexuality portrayals in media. These are multifaceted, evolving issues that intersect with culture, identity, and representation. Historically, mainstream Indian media has often reinforced traditional, patriarchal and heteronormative gender roles and sexual identities, marginalizing non-normative identities and experiences. Over time, there has been a gradual shift towards more diverse and inclusive portrayals, but the stereotypes and misrepresentations persist.

The current study employs an exploratory qualitative design to determine: the existing biases in gender and sexuality issues as showcased through media and cultural practices; impact of the same on society; and what people are doing differently to change the narrative. Cluster purposive sampling was used to gather the experiences of 120 individuals, including 40 professionals and personalities in the world of media, 40 feminist activists working on gender and sexuality and 40 individuals from the larger community, through structured surveys and in-depth interviews.

Results throw light upon patterns of bias related to gender and sexuality, existing in mainstream mass media (print and electronic) and cultural norms. Traditional media representation reinforces gender stereotypes and legitimizes heteronormative stories which stigmatize and shame non-conforming gender and sexual identities. This in turn poses resistance to creating inclusive and safe spaces. Additionally, traditional cultural practices often impede gender explorations, thus limiting opportunities for individuals to self-express for fear of societal exclusion. Results also highlight innovations and initiatives adopted by individuals and institutions to challenge patriarchal stereotypes through media and paradigm shift in culture.

Ultimately, promoting diverse and inclusive representations requires a concerted effort from media creators, producers, and consumers. By advocating for authentic media portrayals, supporting under-represented voices, and creating inclusive cultural practices, we can contribute to a more diverse landscape that reflects the rich tapestry of human experiences.

Keywords: *Gender, Sexuality, Inclusion, Media Representation, Culture*

1. Introduction

1.1 Gender and Sexuality Portrayals in Indian Media and Culture

India, a melting pot of cultures, traditions, and narratives, has long been a platform where diverse perspectives on gender and sexuality intersect and evolve. The portrayal of gender and

sexuality in Indian media and culture reflects not only the complex tapestry of societal norms and values but also the ongoing struggles and triumphs in the quest for gender equality and sexual minority rights (Mukhopadhyay & Banerjee, 2021).

1.2 Review of Literature

Globalization has ushered in a new era of media content development in India, resulting in a rich cultural amalgamation that influences all aspects of society. This cultural blending has significantly impacted perceptions and representations of gender and sexuality, leading to a complex and evolving media landscape where traditional stereotypes are both challenged and reinforced at the same time.

1.2.1 Agents and Models of Gendering in Everyday Life and Indian Society

Everyday life is shaped by factors that define, reinforce, and regulate gender norms, with media serving as a crucial agent in this process. Judith Butler's (1999) concept of 'policing gender' highlights how societal institutions, including media, enforce traditional gender norms, sustaining hierarchies through heteronormative practices that prioritize certain gender expressions. Similarly, Valocchi (2005) argues that institutions like media and socialization agents construct categorical identities to maintain gender hegemony, which restricts the fluidity of gender roles. Both media and societal practices collectively sustain traditional power dynamics and limit the scope for gender fluidity.

1.2.2 The Role of Media in Gender Norms

The advent of media institutions in India signalled a wave of revolutionary inclusiveness, leading to the dismantling of traditional hierarchies. However, media continues to reproduce and reinforce social inequalities, fitting seamlessly into the model of media capitalism that consistently positions women as the subordinate sex in society (India Foundation, 2019). Gender role stereotypes and sexism depicted in popular visual media shape public opinions, beliefs, and attitudes through imitation, idolization, normalization, and sensitization to gender inequality (Nandakumar, 2011).

1.2.3 Cinema as a Social Institution

Cinema is a prominent social institution responsible for maintaining the gender binary. Films frequently reproduce and reinforce heteropatriarchal norms through their narratives, thereby preserving heteronormativity and gender hierarchy (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Popular Hindi cinema often depicts main characters in hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine roles, reinforcing traditional gender norms. Non-conforming characters are often negatively portrayed, emphasizing gender conformity and sexual normativity (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2009).

1.2.4 Social Media and Gender Norms

Social media exhibits complex patterns of sexual behaviour and norms, where positive aspects of gender construction coexist with negative effects like body shaming and exposure to sexual content (Davis, 2018). Analysis of Facebook profile pictures shows that online

representations reflect offline gender stereotypes, with men rated higher on traits such as activeness, dominance, and independence, and women rated higher on attractiveness and dependence (Rose et al., 2012).

1.2.5 Media's Role in Gender Equality

Media, including advertisements and TV shows, significantly shapes societal perceptions of gender roles, currently reinforcing gender inequality, with women being underrepresented and depicted in stereotypical roles (Seluman et al., 2024; Akram, 2023). These portrayals shape societal behaviour and influence professional paths, perpetuating gender biases. Indian media often perpetuates patriarchal views and focuses on sensationalizing gender-based violence rather than addressing fundamental causes (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). There is hence a need for more informed and empathetic coverage of gender issues.

1.2.6 Changing Gender Attitudes in India

Some modern films and TV shows depict women in diverse roles, including professionals and independent individuals, promoting more progressive views of gender roles (Smith et al., 2014). There is increased visibility and acceptance of issues like sexual harassment, but violence against marginalized groups persists. That being said, class and caste prejudices remain strong (Pillai, 2022). Shifting gender norms require addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and privilege.

1.3 Media as a Tool to Address Gender-based Violence (GBV)

While modern media platforms offer spaces for challenging these norms, the influence of traditional portrayals remains strong. The complex patterns of gender representation in media necessitate a multifaceted approach to achieving gender equality. Media's potential as a transformative tool for social change can only be realized through concerted efforts to challenge and dismantle the traditional norms and biases that it currently upholds.

1.3.1 Swayam's Integrated Media Approach to Address GBV

In this context, Swayam, a Kolkata-based feminist women's rights organization, has been working since 1995 to end discrimination and violence against women and their children, advance women's rights, and facilitate women's empowerment, with the vision of a non-discriminatory, violence-free, and equal society. On one hand, Swayam directly supports women survivors of violence, empowering them and raising awareness of their rights. On the other, it actively works to dismantle gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms through preventive strategies like training, research, awareness programs, and networking with state agencies and stakeholders.

Swayam challenges cultural expressions of gender and sexuality that perpetuate inequality by conducting workshops and interactive sessions. It employs an intersectional approach to foster inclusivity and works with men and boys to promote positive role models for gender equality. The organization has strategically used print, electronic, and social media to reach diverse audiences. It has produced issue-based films, videos, and collaborated with media outlets to raise awareness and advocate for policy changes, while also developing educational materials like leaflets and posters, disseminated in public spaces.

Swayam uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to share movement videos, educational materials, and narratives that engage a wide audience. It runs impactful campaigns on issues like domestic violence and gender discrimination, using personal stories and data-driven insights to spark conversation. The organization also leverages live streaming for webinars and panel discussions, allowing real-time global engagement on gender issues. We consistently collaborate with print and electronic media houses for coverage of our events, in the process sensitizing media professionals we work with, as well as increasing awareness of the masses on pressing issues and advocating for policy changes.

Additionally, Swayam has utilized public art through installations and murals to create discussion around key issues and has fostered groups of survivors who use expressive arts like music, theatre, and poetry to voice their struggles and educate the masses. This integrated media approach amplifies Swayam's work, empowering individuals and communities to fight for a gender-equal society.

Swayam's preventive work highlights the need to address existing biases around gender and sexuality, using media and culture as tools to foster more inclusive spaces. This study explores the portrayal of gender and sexuality in Indian media and culture, examining how these identities are constructed and represented within broader socio-cultural frameworks. It aims to foster critical dialogue, challenge stereotypes, and amplify marginalized voices, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of gender and sexuality in India while advocating for greater inclusivity and social justice.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research aims to -

1. Examine portrayals of gender and sexuality in media and Indian culture and how they are perceived, accepted and/ or rejected.
2. Understand the impact of these portrayals on individuals and on the society around them.
3. Explore the different approaches and actions taken by media professionals, social activists, and common people in addressing and exploring gender and sexuality.

2. Research Design

The research employs an exploratory qualitative design grounded in feminist principles to investigate the intersections of gender and sexuality in media and Indian culture. By focusing on marginalized voices and using qualitative methods, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of representations of gender and sexuality and their impact on individuals and communities.

2.1 Sampling Method

Purposive cluster sampling was used to select participants who have specific insights into media and cultural representations of gender and sexuality. The sample size is 120 and includes 3 clusters comprising 40 media professionals, 40 activists, and 40 diverse individuals representing the broader public.

2.2 Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth structured interviews. Interviews with media professionals and activists provided insights into the production and impact of media content, while interviews with common people explored media and cultural portrayal perceptions of and impact on the larger masses.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using qualitative methods. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data set.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring their confidentiality, and addressing any potential harm that may arise from the research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Portrayal of Gender and Sexuality in Indian Media and Culture

Interconnection of Culture and Media

Culture and media are deeply interconnected, with media playing a powerful role in shaping and reinforcing societal norms and belief systems. This study aims to explore the portrayal of gender and sexuality within Indian media and culture, reflecting on how these representations influence and are influenced by cultural values.

Emergence of Themes

Two primary themes were identified from respondents regarding gender and sexuality in media and culture:

1. Biases in Portraying Gender and Sexuality in Media Reinforced by Cultural Norms.
2. Gradual Shifts Occurring in These Portrayals

Persistent Stereotyping and Negative Portrayals

Respondents, including media professionals and activists, noted that portrayals of gender and sexuality remain disparate. Men are often depicted as strong, cis-gendered, and masculine, while women are frequently sexualized. Similarly, LGBTQIA+ individuals are typically represented through tokenistic or comic roles. These stereotypes are perpetuated by patriarchal control over media, shaping content to reflect heteronormative and misogynistic values. As a result, women's voices are marginalized, and gender issues remain inadequately addressed.

Gradual but Not Entirely Positive Shifts

Despite some positive changes, the shift in gender and sexuality portrayals is not comprehensive. While OTT platforms and independent cinema have introduced more nuanced narratives, mainstream media continues to rely on problematic depictions. Films like *Laapataa Ladies* provide thoughtful representations of women's ambitions, yet popular movies like

Kabir Singh and Animal reinforce negative stereotypes, illustrating how patriarchal values remain deeply entrenched in Indian media.

Urban vs. Rural Media

Inclusive representation is more visible in urban media, providing space for gender and sexuality expression, unlike rural media, where such depictions are scarce. While urban platforms have made strides in challenging norms, regional shows, like Bengali soaps, continue to reinforce stereotypes. OTT platforms offer more nuanced portrayals but achieving balanced representation across media remains difficult.

Shifts in LGBTQIA+ Representation

LGBTQIA+ representation has evolved from being comic relief to more complex narratives in urban and social media. However, that is only limited to some social media channels and urban media content. Vernacular and mainstream media still lack sensitivity and authentic portrayals of non-binary and transgender individuals.

Cultural Biases and Media Neglect

Cultural biases against gender and sexual minorities are reinforced by media's neglect of the lives and experiences of women, marginalized groups like housewives, small business owners, and the LGBTQIA+ community, whose concerns receive minimal coverage, perpetuating their marginalization.

Tokenistic Representation vs. Authentic Inclusion

Activists highlight that LGBTQIA+ representation in mainstream media remains tokenistic, with straight actors often cast in queer roles and stereotypes reinforced on social media. While there have been positive developments, OTT platforms frequently focus on tragic narratives, impacting young LGBTQIA+ viewers' self-esteem. The absence of intersectionality results in poor representation of queer youth, and societal discomfort with adolescent sexuality restricts comprehensive dialogue and support.

Role of Social Media

Social media serves as a dual-edged platform, reflecting both progressive and regressive portrayals of gender and sexuality. While it has enabled new discussions, it also perpetuates traditional norms, such as the "tradwife" trend romanticizing outdated gender roles. Popular creators tend to focus on broad liberal ideas, with "choice feminism" dominating narratives, emphasizing personal choices rather than addressing systemic issues. The platform's comment sections reveal diverse reactions, from supportive to abusive, reflecting wider societal attitudes.

Persistent Stereotypes and Limited Discussions

Though discussions on gender and sexuality are increasing, rigid stereotypes persist, even within non-binary and same-sex relationships. Conversations around LGBTQIA+ identities remain limited and face resistance, complicating self-expression and breaking traditional familial norms. Despite signs of gradual change, traditional views prevail, and non-heteronormative identities are still superficially represented.

3.2 Impact of Gender and Sexuality Portrayals on Individuals and Society

The portrayal of gender and sexuality in media and culture has a profound impact on both individuals and society.

Impact on Society

Media representations influence public perception, reinforce or challenge societal norms, and affect the self-esteem and identity formation of individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups.

Majority of the media professionals' content is driven by both their creative needs and the desire to impact others in positive ways. The importance of raising awareness, educating the audience, and sparking critical thinking was highlighted in their responses. They try and challenge existing norms and values to bring about social change, particularly in gender issues and LGBTQIA+ rights. The creators outlined their efforts to integrate inclusive perspectives in their work, such as publishing literature from underrepresented populations, and engaging with marginalized communities to generate awareness and action.

This reiterates the influence of media, journalism, filmmaking, and personal experiences on shaping public perception and promoting societal understanding and empathy. They emphasize the importance of building trust and mutual respect with marginalized communities, striving for inclusivity in reporting, and avoiding making a mockery of LGBTQIA+ issues. They also highlight the reciprocal impact of their work, raising awareness among readers about issues faced by marginalized communities while fostering a deeper understanding and respect within themselves for the responsibilities and nuances of reporting on these topics. Additionally, they navigate the challenges of contemporary media consumption, advocating for gender responsiveness and striving to present diverse and respectful portrayals of marginalized communities. There is also a dialogue around the role of media in creating social change, the impact of social media on spreading hatred, and the challenges of balancing impactful content with clickable stories

According to activists, media has a significant impact on the psyche of people due to its widespread reach and accessibility. Visual imagery in films and television evokes more emotional response and connection from the audience. Films, therefore, have a much larger impact than other mediums in terms of awareness and sensitization. Media portrayals often reflect existing societal norms and conversations, rather than solely creating them, but they have the power to initiate discussions and highlight new topics of importance. Negative impact of media includes perpetuation of gender stereotypes, limited positive representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in mainstream media and discrimination and violence against marginalized genders. Tokenistic and stereotypical media representations hinder progress towards acceptance and understanding of LGBTQIA+ communities.

For example, media today showcases diverse content, often stereotyping queer culture to appeal to certain audiences. The queer community uses media as a platform to express themselves and share their stories, yet media fails to reflect the intersectionality of their experiences. Despite progress, many queer individuals still face fear and discrimination in workplaces and media representation. Media could have done a better job of covering the denial of marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples by saying while same-sex marriage is not legal, individuals still have the right to protection and to choose our partner. It created so much fear

in the queer community that organizations working with this community received many cases of violence, while some landlords wanted to evict tenants, saying it was not legal for them to live together.

Another example of media impact is self-censorship which is often practiced by women and girls and is manifested in what they wear, how they wear it, when do they come home, how they sit, how aggressive they are in their expression, how much they eat, what they choose to eat, how they eat, how loudly they speak, how many holidays they feel entitled to, what compliments they accept or deny. All this is a result of the gender and cultural stereotypes that are ingrained in women from a very early age, as well as media content they consume which reinforce the same. Further, media portrayals in movies like 'Kabir Singh' normalize violence against women, stalking, and eve teasing, reinforcing toxic masculinity and perpetuating gender-based violence.

In terms of the positive impact of media, positive media representations can contribute to shaping more respectful societal norms. For example, YouTube has many short films where women are portrayed as responsible and strong, fighting for their rights. These films might not run in theatres but perform well on over-the-top (OTT) platforms, impacting people of all ages positively. Positive media representations can inspire marginalized groups and influence public opinion and social change, for example, portraying social messages, like in 'Laapataa Ladies'.

The portrayal of gender and sexuality norms in media has significantly impacted the lives of the larger public interviewed for this study, providing both guidance and challenges for them. For many, these portrayals have proven to be limiting, reinforcing stereotypes, and restricting the expression of their individual identities. For example, as a male photographer interested in themes of emotion and vulnerability, one often encounters resistance when trying to break away from traditional notions of masculinity. Exposure and access to global content on Netflix or social content by influencers has heightened awareness of different gender identities and sexual orientations, prompting many to critically analyse media representations and question stereotypes. These portrayals have influenced the journey of self-discovery and identity exploration for many people. At the same time, underrepresentation, misrepresentation and biased portrayals have often made it difficult for individuals of diverse gender and sexual backgrounds to find stories and experiences they can relate to. Despite these challenges, encountering diverse and respectful portrayals has resulted in motivating majority of the masses to advocate for more inclusive practices within their personal and professional spheres as well as in broader cultural conversations.

Overall, responses highlight the need for more responsible and accurate media representation that celebrates diversity and promotes social change. That being said, one also needs to realize that media portrayals and consumption are a two-way process and there needs to be a shared responsibility between media and individuals using these platforms.

Impact on Personal and Professional Lives of Media Personnel

The experiences of creating content and expressions have had a profound impact on majority of the media professionals who were interviewed. They have learned a lot from the stories they have covered. Hearing about the lived experiences, struggles and journeys of marginalized communities have often rendered them speechless and made them realize the importance of portraying news without bias. These experiences have enabled many of them to

strive to be open-minded and neutral as a journalist, putting aside their own judgments and emotions.

Moreover, creating content about gender and sexuality has led journalists and content creators to gain a deeper understanding and empathy for diverse experiences, leading to personal growth and a stronger connection with their audience. It has resulted in a broadening of their worldview. Media professionals talked about how their experiences have changed their perceptions and influenced their work in media and journalism. They even mentioned the impact of their work on their personal growth, as well as the challenges and biases they have faced in their career. Addressing sensitive topics can also be emotionally challenging and may expose content creators to criticism or backlash.

Overall, their experiences in creating content have impacted them in various ways, including fostering personal growth, broadening their understanding, and inspiring them to fight against social injustices. They have learned to navigate the challenges that come with addressing sensitive topics and have found ways to manage the emotional toll through self-care and seeking support from colleagues and mental health professionals. Their work has led to a deeper understanding of diverse experiences and a commitment to creating more inclusive and balanced processes for individuals with all gender and sexual identities.

3.3 Exploring Approaches and Actions to Ensure Diverse and Inclusive Portrayals

Responders in the discussion expressed a strong desire for a more balanced and respectful portrayal of all genders in the media. They emphasized the need for characters that reflect real, everyday situations, believing that such representations can challenge existing stereotypes and prejudices that are often perpetuated in the media. There is a consistent call for media to go beyond traditional portrayals and showcase individuals in more relatable, authentic roles. Responders believe that characters should be depicted in ways that normalize diverse identities and experiences, as well as capture the complexities and nuances of each experience.

This push for diversity extends beyond the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ characters. Responders advocate for a broader range of perspectives, including characters from different regions, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds within India. Such diversity in representation, they argue, would lead to more authentic and relatable narratives, providing audiences with a deeper understanding of the variety of human experiences.

In addition to advocating for more inclusive content, responders emphasize the importance of media creators and platforms promoting diversity behind the scenes. By providing opportunities for creators from diverse backgrounds, media platforms can ensure that the stories being told are authentic and multifaceted. Responders advocate for the promotion of diverse talent both in front of and behind the camera, thereby ensuring a richer and more inclusive media landscape.

One key area of concern for the responders is the role that schools, and families can play in fostering acceptance and inclusivity. They believe that educational programs, both within formal education settings and at home, should promote discussions about gender roles and sexual orientations. Media has a powerful role in shaping societal attitudes, but schools and families are fundamental in building the foundations for inclusive and accepting mindsets from a young age.

OTT platforms were specifically highlighted as a powerful medium for promoting diversity and inclusion in media. These platforms cater to niche audiences that are often underrepresented in traditional media, allowing for the creation of innovative, diverse, and inclusive content. Responders see OTT platforms as an opportunity to tell stories that may not find space in mainstream television or cinema. Content addressing issues like LGBTQIA+ rights, intersectional feminism, and social justice has a better chance of being produced and accepted within the more flexible environment of OTT platforms, which can cater to progressive and underrepresented narratives.

The challenges with mainstream media were also acknowledged. Responders expressed concern that mainstream television and film continue to perpetuate regressive gender stereotypes and societal misconceptions. They stressed the importance of media advocacy to influence positive social change. Media advocates must continue to push for more equitable and sensitive portrayals of diverse identities, using their platforms to influence public perception and challenge harmful stereotypes.

To amplify these efforts, responders advocate for collaboration with grassroots organizations, which work on gender, sexuality, and social justice issues. By working together, media creators and activists can amplify marginalized voices and contribute to broader societal dialogues about these critical issues. Responders also advocate for working within legal frameworks to challenge discriminatory laws and media portrayals. Intersectionality is another crucial aspect of advocacy that was stressed upon. Gender advocacy should not happen in isolation but must recognize the intersections of caste, class, and sexual identity. Advocacy that ignores these interconnected factors risks perpetuating exclusionary practices. Responders call for interconnected solutions that address broader social justice concerns, ensuring that no one is left behind in the push for equality and inclusivity.

In addition to traditional media, responders noted the effectiveness of newer platforms like Instagram, podcasts, and stand-up comedy in challenging stereotypes. These platforms provide innovative and engaging ways to reach audiences and discuss complex issues related to gender and sexuality. Responders believe that these newer forms of media can be just as powerful as traditional outlets in influencing public perception and fostering inclusivity.

Advocacy for policy changes is another key theme. Responders call for policies that include more women and queer voices in media, both onscreen and off. They believe that media regulators should be held accountable for allowing harmful portrayals of marginalized communities. By advocating for stricter guidelines and more responsible portrayals, they hope to create a media environment that reflects the diversity of society more accurately and sensitively.

Within their own workplaces, responders shared that they actively work towards fostering more inclusive environments. Some have created internal committees to address concerns about gender and sexual identity, while others have employed more women to ensure a balanced workforce. These internal structures help create channels for addressing issues, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and respected. Responders believe that by taking these proactive steps, they are contributing to a broader movement toward equitable representation.

Responders shared experiences of navigating power dynamics, especially in abusive or discriminatory situations, highlighting the importance of knowing when and how to speak up,

often directly or through management. They emphasize that building alliances and fostering respect are key to creating inclusive workplaces.

In conclusion, responders call for a more inclusive and diverse portrayal of gender and sexuality in media and culture, both in content and among creators, to challenge stereotypes and promote equity. Through media advocacy, grassroots collaboration, and workplace efforts, they are committed to fostering societal change, aiming for broader representation across media platforms.

4. Conclusion:

The analysis of cultural stereotypes and media portrayals highlights a complex relationship between media, societal norms, and public perception. While progress has been made, media still often reinforces biases rooted in tradition, particularly in the portrayal of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals. More inclusive and authentic media representation is needed. Social media, despite its democratizing potential, can also perpetuate traditional norms, underscoring the need for a more nuanced discourse to challenge institutional biases.

In India, media representation of gender and sexuality has evolved, reflecting both progress and ongoing challenges. Gender equality remains a work in progress, with improvements in media sensitivity, but regional disparities and underrepresentation persist. Yet, optimism exists as media narratives slowly shift toward inclusivity, providing opportunities and resources that signal positive change.

Future changes in media portrayals require a multifaceted approach, including thoughtful representations, sensitivity in reporting, and systemic reforms within media organizations. Sensitization programs, inclusive work environments, and greater representation in leadership are crucial steps toward an equitable media landscape. Systemic biases still challenge women and LGBTQIA+ individuals in media. Gendered roles, workplace harassment, and limited representation of LGBTQIA+ voices hinder diversity. Nonetheless, gradual progress is visible, with increased opportunities and a growing awareness among media professionals of the need to reflect societal changes accurately.

In sum, advancing gender and sexuality representation in Indian media is essential for an inclusive, equitable society. While strides have been made, continuous effort is necessary to achieve true gender equality, foster intersectional approaches, and ensure media remains a powerful agent for societal change.

5. Limitations

The study could have yielded more generalizable results if it also included quantitative analyses. Due to time constraints, researchers were unable to conduct a content analysis of various media portrayals of gender and sexuality.

6. Implications for Future Research

This study establishes a foundation for understanding shifts in gender and sexuality portrayals in Indian media and culture. It enables further research to compare portrayals across platforms, assess impacts on marginalized communities, and identify effective strategies against biases, highlighting areas for progress toward equitable representation.

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The Nexus of Nourishment: Exploring Gender, Culture, and Society Through Food in Post-War Japanese Literature

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Abstract

This paper will reflect upon the representation of food in Japanese literature. Food is an essential part of life that connects us to different cultures, nature, and each other. In Terry Eagleton's words, "Endlessly interpretable," and food, like literature," looks like an object but is a relationship."¹ A question arises: What is the need to read about food? When it is just considered a commodity. How has food been written in the literature? Thus, exploring food in Japanese literature gives an intimidating tour of the post-world Wartime. Food has been changing with time, and the factors affected are industrialization, citification, and the social construction of gender. What is the necessity of reading food in the literature? What sort of knowledge can be acquired through literature? I will try to answer these questions in this paper by observing and stating the incidents from several pieces of literature written in the later 20th century and keeping the different elements under the umbrella. The multiplex relation of food with food, rituals, politics, gathering, appetite, celebration, caring, pride, abundance, poverty, communication, employment, and hunger. To understand food in the literature, we first need to comprehend the ties of food with society and culture. My paper will focus mainly on the concerns of gender and food. Somehow, food is always a drawing analogy for women. The image has a peculiar connection to the food or cooking. For a woman, food is a tool to configure power and explain gender-oriented roles.

Keywords: *food, woman, gender, power, society*

1. Introduction

The convergence of femininity and food has always been an enchanting theme in Japanese Literature. Representation of food, analogies, images, and metaphors have been used to picturise the ambiguous relationship between tradition, culture, ideas, and identity in Japanese society. Numerous works on the gastronomic genre have presented the Food and Kitchen as literary devices that configure the power, authority, and social status specifically for women in Japanese society. Japanese Literature often depicts the expectations of being a Woman in the Kitchen, carrying an attitude of servitude, cooking, and feeding the family well. The pieces have specifications of drawing a woman as a keeper of the household, domestic responsibilities, and serving the traditional roles as per the norms of Japanese society.

Women with ladles, pans, and woks are not only her equipment for dishing but also the significance of her existence. The kitchen is not only a space but also a proof of her identity that signifies her only authority. Japanese literature shows the preparation of the meal is a duty of a lady of the house, bringing family together and nurturing them through her cooking. The writers are using the Kitchen to explore the role of women and their relationships and feelings by keeping the kitchen as a backdrop. The love is cooking in the kitchen in the shape of food and the woman is serving her kin. The kinship draws from women, food, and the kitchen and approaches family as a love.

¹ Terry Eagleton, "Edible Erciture," pp.204-205.

The motif of aligning Women and Food can be read that it is embedded in the culture, tradition, and history as an interesting subject for the readers. Food is not just a source of appetite that suffices one's hunger but also a setting to bestow the rooted way of Japanese society. "Rather, it is invested with a set of powers that derives and manipulates the social order" (Dharline,2020), how gender access to food is different and defines its social setting. The Kitchen and Food have always been the agency and autonomy for women even in history as well. There were always a few stations for women to work at, as the role of women in Japanese society was less to show their creativity and talent. And the Kitchen was one of the few spaces where women could generate their authority and control.

This vigorous matter is a subject of manifold Japanese literature, wherein food is shown as a compound sign that bolsters and digresses gender roles and norms. There are works, where a woman is cooking efficiently presenting her talent and living as a tale of dynamic power and authority, permitting her to pave and restrain the dominance and manipulation placed upon them. Contrariwise, other works represent the woman in the kitchen and performing one of the thankless jobs and assert subjection, where a woman is confined to domesticity only.

2. Methods and Materials

Japanese Literature has always been a rich source for scholars and readers to learn and know this dynamic theme of Food and Women, which has remained a fascinating reading subject. The portrayal of women and food is through depiction in Japanese Literature. The significance of food in Japanese Literature extends beyond mere sustenance, as it symbolizes cultural identity, community, and spiritual connection. (Ishioka,2008). The methods consist of examining food and women via analysis of the texts. This paper looks at Qualitative textual analysis methods. Introspecting the language patterns and power dynamics in texts related to food and women. Systematically coding and analyzing texts to identify themes, patterns, and representations of food and women. The narrative analysis through studying stories and narratives about food and women to understand cultural and social contexts. And, the semiotic analysis of symbols, metaphors, and meanings associated with food and women in texts.

"Girl to look after the kitchen "(*蓼食う虫い* by Tanizaki)², The topic represents that there is no set pattern for taste and ambition which tells the importance of relativity and multiplicity. The work revolves around MISAKO'S life and her multiple relationships formed with food. There are two female characters, Misako and O- Hisa who share their connections with food which symbolizes their different cultures and ways of processing society. In the novel, Tanizaki sheds light on the Kanto and Kansai region and their connectivity. How food and literature are connected to specific cultures and societies.

(Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novels)³. This novel discusses the difference in food due to the culture and tradition followed in the Kanto and Kansai regions. Kanto is eastern and Kansai is western. Eastern as traditional culture and Western as modern or foreign traditions. O-Hisa despite concubine showers Kanto as a traditional image of cooking. This Kyoto-style food is not O-Hisa-styled food, it is Misako's

² Tanizaki, Tade Kuu Mushi, p.193; Some Prefer Nettles, p.191-196

Tanizaki marks the girl as (少女), a typical naïve girl, interpreted as an innocent teenage girl

³ David Pollack, Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel, pp. 70

father who instructed her to be a conventional one. Moral threading comes with a traditional unit of O-Hisa's cuisines. What is so unconventional in this novel? Food/women/man, no, these are common in Japanese literature, however, there is a stance that cannot go unnoticed, it is the man who is teaching a woman- How to cook and what to cook.

Henceforth, who has the authority to decide, the answer is man, though the woman is cooking, she has a ladle in her hand, but the man controls it. Whereas, Misako adheres to the Kansai culture, eating toast and liver sausages from a German Butcher in Kobe⁴, and continuous courtly love for Kaname's brother have been represented in a modern image and what is modern in the novel is amoral and traditional. Thus, O-Hisa is a concubine, but the representation of food is making her character motherly as Misako's father portrays her picture of mother. And Misako who eats Western food and gets divorced too which spreads the image of anti-tradition. Food is severely connected to gender choices, but the question is 'Are these choices made by both genders by choice or inculcated'. Gender is the focal subject in Literature but what about food? Here food, and gender in the Literature are interconnected, and the association of food with culture and rituals is said but not highlighted how food and literature are connected to specific cultures and societies.⁵

(Reading Against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novels by David Pollack). This work presents the culture. Well, it is confusing to deliver such a statement, what is culture? A culture that creates an environment around its subjects and the concept of self-identity⁶. Culture is an indispensable association of food and cooking with the role of gender and sexuality. (Psychoanalytic theory to Gender relationship with food by Sigmund Freud). This study elaborates on the five stages connecting food and gender that are Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latent, and genital⁷.

Freud says that the ego and superego develop in response to the need for gratification in a socially fitted circle. The psychoanalysis of women is born from the womanless history (his + story) of the world, occurring from a male perspective with the creation of a façade that the foundation of the society is males themselves. Sigmund Freud says that psychoanalysis is a great part of a human(female) personality. Freud's expository of the theory of "Psychoanalysis" is rooted in the female's deprivation from sexuality. Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques related to the study of the "unconscious mind". Freud brings out the picture of a woman who is either angel ('Madonna') or a monster('whore'). Women have been repressed by men for many centuries. Women's sexuality is always signified as the jewelry of a woman to make her admirable. But when her sexuality goes beyond the social boundaries then it becomes a threat to man's wilderness. The concept of gender and sexuality are quite conventional, but every research reveals the dogmatic truth between women and men. "sexuality" of men is never burdened by societal norms, although women are always been the target of all moralities and manners.

Segment Freud pronounces the psychoanalysis of women's being a commodity by the clinical study of the "Madonna-whore complex". Sigmund explains how women are shown as

⁴ Tanizaki, Tade Kuu Mushi, p.195; Some Prefer Nettles, p.198

⁵ David Pollack, Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel, pp. 71-83

⁶ David Pollack, Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel, pp. 71-83

⁷ Freud-stages-of-psychosexual-development-2795962

Sigmund Freud "Men are strong so long as they represent a strong idea, they become powerless once they oppose it."

a saint and a sinner. Freud lights the shades of socially 'Good' women⁸. Women are always defined by the men and not by the women themselves. The repressed sexuality makes women non-sexual and places them into the frame of idealized women. A man always keeps tracking his mother into his women like a 'Virgin Mary'. If a woman is purely driven by sexual needs in her legal marriage, then she is not considered an object of love. They become commodity who serves as a whore for men. Ill-perception of males extorts the complex of 'Madonna and Whore'. Simone De Beauvoir explores the manipulation of knowledge which was the foundation of the political system of the patriarchal world. Simone describes the trap of biological, psychological, and economic discrimination against women. The masculinity adheres to the concept of domination and is the major illustration of the 'Other' and the 'Outsider'⁹. Sometimes patriarchy or stereotypical learnings lead the literature towards the usual phase of gender society.

Food as an illegitimate child in Japanese literature (Saigo no Bansen by Kaiko Takeshi). The writer argues that literature has treated 'drinking' significantly, however, food has been always an outsider or object in literature. It describes how food is meant to be vulgar or unmanly to be talked about. Kaiko's word is illegitimate gives the hand to the notion of serious or legitimate literature for the realm of male rather than female or child. Thus, food is associated with and relies on a man to set the picture in literature.

Food and Female Subjectivity in the Writing (Literary Daughter's Recipes by Mori Mari) Mari is one of the few writers who talk about happiness rather than pain. Her work is free of misery which is the direct criticism of Ryosai Kenbo¹⁰. The celebration of food: Kitchen and salad anniversary (キッチン) by Yoshimoto Banana). Mikage does not cook the relinquished or expensive food but she cooks food like katsu don¹¹ not very expensive, for herself and her surrogate family situation of her self-identification and pleasure and gratification. This novel is not the same as the other one and it was one of its reasons to be commercially hit among the readers. Here Mikage after her grandmother's death, finds her solace in the kitchen. The point of cooking and serving others is well maintained in the book, however, as a reader, there is one incompleteness that Mikage cooks, Her nature of servitude is all written in a new manner, and readers like it. Though there is nothing new that can be accomplished in this work, the same image has been depicted and has a different articulation. What Mikage is doing? Her world moves around the kitchen only and even finds her sleeping space there. She is filling the stomach of her surrogate family, What about her nourishment? No one is taking care of it, nor is Mikage herself. Here again, the book is chirping feminine, as food is feminine only, What about the identity? There is a space called 'Kitchen,' but is it a home or just a safe place? These are the unanswered questions.

⁸ "Madonna-whore complex". Sigmund explains how women are shown as a saint and a sinner. Freud lights the shades of socially 'Good' women.

⁹ Edward Said "Orientalism"

¹⁰ "Ryori to watashi", in Mori Mari zenshu, vol.3, p.6

The discourse of ryōsai-kenbo (a good wife and wise mother) had been promoted in Japan since the late 19th century. This idea was closely linked to both contemporary Japanese gender discourses and Western gender discourses. It has been suggested that the idea of ryōsai-kenbo was spread via the modernization of social institutions such as Japanese IE 家 (household system, education, and the media in Japan.

¹¹ Yoshimoto Banana's Kitchen, p.69

3. Theoretical Foundation

Theory in Socialism and Feminism is to explain the history that has mounted our past and will be preparing our future. This work will present the 'social construction of gender' and marginalization'. What is 'Feminism'? 'Feminism' is a movement that arises from the anguish of women's spirit, and excruciating distress from the male stream. The uncured agony of womankind gave birth to 'Feminism' which shook the patriarchal world. As per our knowledge, gender talks about two sexes, male and female. But 'Feminism' breaks the conventional description of gender which used to be a synonym of patriarchy. In a patriarchal world gender is one and equivalent to male. There was no space for another gender (FEMALE). 'Feminism' only asks for its identity of being human who has all the rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men. This 'ism' movement demands women's rights from which they have been deprived since their birth or existence. There are enormous differences in the socioeconomic status of women, depending on their race, class, nationality, and geographic location.

Nevertheless, women are disproportionately located at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale in all societies (John Baylis, *The Globalization of World Politics*, 2008, pg. 513). Three-fifths of the world's one billion poorest people are women and girls (United Nations Development Programme 2006b:20). The gender division of labor is a structure that will be analyzed on the social construction of gender. the perception of civilization is ruled by a patriarchal society to subjugate women in all fields of life. Women are suppressed in all spheres: familial, social, economic, legal, education, and art. In the Bible, only women are depicted as a danger to men and in a pessimistic ray of light. Civilization has drawn more non-eligibility of women to be civilized. Therefore, 'Feminism' draws a picture of equality for both genders. 'Feminism' asks for the improvement of both men and women. Women are not at all inferior to men. If a male and female will go and get their education together then women will not be indolent, and men will not have a desire to subjugate them.

Peter Leonard defines marginality as, ". . . being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity". Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world. Marginalized people have relatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in delving contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationships means that they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on the development of human beings, as well as on society at large¹². Marginalism is deep-rooted in Japanese society, and through it, this work takes out the division of household food and masculine power in professional culinary art.

4. Discussion on Gendered Kitchen

The Reinforcement of traditional gender roles in the domestic kitchen has historically been associated with women and seen as a feminine space. When men enter this space, it can

¹² The concept of marginality was first introduced by Robert Park (1928). Marginalization is a symbol that refers to processes by which individuals beyond groups are kept at or pushed beyond the edges of society. The term outsiders may be used to refer to those individuals or groups who are marginalized.

be seen as a departure from traditional gender roles and expectations. However, rather than challenging these gender roles, the presence of men in the domestic kitchen can reinforce the idea that cooking and domestic duties are primarily women's responsibilities. There is a limited Scope of Masculinity as men entering the domestic kitchen often do so in specific circumstances or for specific purposes, such as preparing meals for themselves or their families. This limited scope of involvement can reinforce the notion that cooking is a temporary or occasional activity for men, while women are expected to take on the bulk of domestic responsibilities daily. This reinforces the gendered division of labor and the idea that certain tasks are inherently feminine.

There are different discourses and expectations that how men's involvement in the domestic kitchen is portrayed and discussed can differ from that of women. Media and popular discourse often emphasize practical reasons for men's cooking, such as economic recession or health management, which can present their involvement as a choice rather than an expectation or obligation. This discourse can perpetuate the idea that men's involvement in the domestic kitchen is exceptional or extraordinary, while women's involvement is taken for granted. The limited representation is there despite men's increasing presence in the domestic kitchen, the representation of men as domestic cooks in media and popular culture remains relatively limited compared to women. This lack of representation can contribute to the perception that men's involvement in the domestic kitchen is less common or less significant, reinforcing the gendered division of labor. Overall, while men's entry into the domestic kitchen may challenge traditional gender roles to some extent, it often does so within a limited framework that reinforces the gendering of spaces. The broader societal expectations and cultural norms surrounding domestic duties and gender roles continue to shape the perception and division of labor within the domestic sphere.

Certain professions and jobs are manipulated by one gender. For example, nursing and teaching are often associated with women, while engineering and construction are predominantly male dominated. This occupational segregation reinforces gender stereotypes and limits opportunities for individuals to pursue careers outside of traditional gender norms. Women, on average, earn less than men for performing the same or similar work. This gender pay gap is a manifestation of gendered power dynamics in the workplace, where women's labor is undervalued, and their contributions are often overlooked or marginalized. "The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing to higher-level positions in organizations."¹³ Despite equal qualifications and capabilities, women often face obstacles in reaching top leadership positions, limiting their access to power and decision-making roles. Within workplaces, there is often a gendered division of labor, where certain tasks or responsibilities are assigned based on gender stereotypes. For example, women may be expected to take on administrative or caregiving roles, while men are more likely to be assigned leadership or technical positions. This division of labor reinforces gender hierarchies and limits opportunities for women to access positions of power. It is important to note that these gendered dynamics in the workplace are not universal and can vary across different industries, cultures, and countries. Efforts to address and challenge these gendered power dynamics

¹³ Marilyn Loden coined the phrase "glass ceiling" at a 1978 Women's Exposition.

include promoting diversity and inclusion, implementing equal pay policies, and creating supportive work environments that value and empower all employees regardless of gender.

The gendered roles in society were reflected in the kitchen, both professional and domestic. The domestic kitchen was seen as feminine, while the professional kitchen was seen as masculine. Women were often relegated to assisting men in the kitchen rather than being recognized as chefs. The profession of chef, particularly in Japan, has been highly aestheticized. Films like "Jiro Dreams of Sushi" have promoted the idea of culinary mastery, which is tied to martial arts ideology. The concept of Shu-ha-ri, which emphasizes repetition and mastery of technique, has been applied to cooking. This ideology reinforces gender hierarchies and limits the ability of women to be recognized as masters in the culinary. In summary, Japanese modern history, starting from the Meiji period, witnessed the construction of modern gender identities. The Good Wife, Wise Mother ideal, and the rise of the salaryman shaped gender roles in society. These gendered roles extended to the kitchen, where women were often relegated to assisting men. The aestheticization of culinary mastery, influenced by martial arts ideology, further reinforced gender hierarchies and limited women's participation in the culinary profession. The Good Wife, Wise Mother ideal, and the rise of the salaryman shaped gender roles in society. These gendered roles extended to the kitchen, where women were often relegated to assisting men.

5. Result

Certain industries and occupations are dominated by one gender. For example, nursing and teaching are often associated with women, while engineering and construction are predominantly male dominated. This occupational segregation reinforces gender stereotypes and limits opportunities for individuals to pursue careers outside of traditional gender norms. Women, on average, earn less than men for performing the same or similar work. This gender pay gap is a manifestation of gendered power dynamics in the workplace, where women's labor is undervalued, and their contributions are often overlooked or marginalized. The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing to higher-level positions in organizations. Despite equal qualifications and capabilities, women often face obstacles in reaching top leadership positions, limiting their access to power and decision-making roles. Within workplaces, there is often a gendered division of labor, where certain tasks or responsibilities are assigned based on gender stereotypes. For example, women may be expected to take on administrative or caregiving roles, while men are more likely to be assigned leadership or technical positions. This division of labor reinforces gender hierarchies and limits opportunities for women to access positions of power. It is important to note that these gendered dynamics in the workplace are not universal and can vary across different industries, cultures, and countries. Efforts to address and challenge these gendered power dynamics include promoting diversity and inclusion, implementing equal pay policies, and creating supportive work environments that value and empower all employees regardless of gender. There are several reasons for the lack of women in the professional kitchen which are gender stereotypes and social expectations that are associated with traditional gender roles and stereotypes have associated cooking and domestic work with women, while professional kitchens have been seen as male-dominated spaces. These societal expectations and stereotypes

can discourage women from pursuing careers as professional chefs and result in confinement in the household Kitchen.

6. Conclusion

In Japanese literature, food and women are often intertwined and symbolically linked, reflecting cultural attitudes toward gender, domesticity, and identity. Food symbolizes love, care, and nurturing as it has always been written and represented. Food is often prepared by women, emphasizing their domestic role, representing hospitality, and generosity, and community bonding can signify comfort, security, and nostalgia. Sometimes used as a metaphor for life, death, and the human condition

Women are frequently depicted in domestic settings, emphasizing their roles as caregivers and homemakers who are associated with food preparation, highlighting their nurturing and maternal qualities that are often portrayed as submissive, obedient, and self-sacrificing may symbolize tradition, cultural heritage, and social expectations that can represent the constraints and limitations of gender roles in Japanese society. The intersection of food and women in Japanese literature highlights the complex relationships between gender, culture, and identity, offering insights into the country's social and historical context.

Further studies will continue to research 'How do cultural and social contexts shape women's experiences with food?' and 'What power dynamics are at play in representations of food and women?' These methods and sources will examine food and women through textual analysis, uncovering insights into cultural, social, and historical contexts in Japanese Literature.

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Reclaiming Maria Clara: Deconstructing the Colonial Legacy and Patriarchal Hegemony Impeding Filipina Progress in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Querida María Clara, lo siento por los años en que permitimos que los conquistadores te arrebaten tu identidad. Dear Maria Clara, I apologize for the years we let the conquistadores take away your identity.

*Maria Clara, your image ingrained in our subconscious as the submissive, pure, innocent Filipina, haunts us even today. You are the epitome of one of the lasting legacies of 300 years of Spanish colonization in the Philippines. For centuries we put you on the pedestal of the social fabric of our nation as the idealized Filipina, carrying those traits impelled to you by the conquistadores. For decades of knowing you and coming across you in our high school textbooks in *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, we joined the guardia civil in taking away your agency. We turn a blind eye to your rape by Padre Salvi and abandoned you the way your la familia did ~ you eventually lose your sanity in the convent!*

Our post-colonial society has plagued contemporary media with your heightened feminine ideals and our films and soap operas sustained your image in our cultural milieu. People ask: Is Maria Clara an archetype, a literary trope, a paragon, or a myth? You— who originated as a literary character from Jose Rizal's novel have endured and created so many afterlives in our national imagination, that we blurred the lines of your imagery and made you a national personification of a Filipina. Did we? or was it the patriarchy? The patriarchy disguised in our leading progress in improving the gender gap in the Philippines may have scratched your image on the surface. Yet, it still lingers in the microfibers of our nation, hiding within the confines of homes, schools, and workplaces. Yours is the image posited every time we Filipinas, attempt to dismantle the patriarchal systems in place, when we express ourselves in a loud, gaudy ostentatious manner when we hold positions of power surpassing men, yours is the face that this patriarchal society uses to diminish those achievements and to maintain the patriarchy.

*But no longer! Filipinas will reclaim your narrative, subvert your colonized version, repudiate the good *mujer Christiana* that erased in our histories the *la mujer indigena* and take back all the parts of you vilified by centuries of different phases of colonization to bring to the fore the new Filipina woman unencumbered by her past.*

1. Introduction

For a woman of Southeast Asian descent, particularly from the Philippines, one often must struggle with the woman question, the banality of whether she depicts the progressive modern woman, financially independent, outspoken, and strengthened by her own experience or whether she mirrors a submissive wife, an obedient daughter, or the exotic woman viewed by the west. Centuries of western colonization perpetuated different expectations of femininity in the Philippines, historically relegating her to a lower stature than men. Tarrayo elucidates “the Filipino woman during the pre-hispanic era was a chantress, a priestess, and a warrior, but three hundred years of Spanish colonization changed her to a docile, submissive, obedient woman, often tied to the kitchen sink and in servitude to her husband” (111). Despite leaping

progress in improving the gender gap in the Philippines, the inescapable shadow of the Maria Clara image continues to plague Filipina's progress in the 21st century. The Maria Clara image emerges from the novel written by the Filipino political activist, author Jose Rizal, entitled *Noli Me Tangere* translated in English as *The Social Cancer*, published in 1887 during the Spanish colonization. I would like to elucidate two main points in this paper; 1. How did patriarchy construct Maria Clara? and 2. How did religion and education remain the hegemonic tools that perpetuate the persisting image of Maria Clara even in today's society? Finally, the paper seeks to explore ways to reclaim Maria Clara's narrative and redefine the 21st-century Filipina feminine ideal.

Feminist scholars in the Philippines have extensively studied the character of *Maria Clara* from *Noli Me Tangere* and have investigated the societal ethos/norms that she represents in Philippine history and how her literary character endured, strengthened and lived on to the extent of relegating her as national idealization for Filipinas, reinforcing to this day the gender roles, feminine ideals during Spanish colonial era in present Philippine socio-cultural discourse (Hau 125; Sanchez 4; Altez-Abela 198;). Hau argues that more than other characters in Rizal's novels and or in Philippine literature, Maria Clara, for more than a century, has joined the ranks of institutionalized indelible literary characters. Her character persisted and endured plural, branching afterlives (120). She became an icon, an archetype, a trope, and a paragon in the Philippine cultural context. Maria Clara became a "female icon...disseminated through translation and adaptation, temporalization, commodification, and transmedial storytelling (Hau 118). However, the author argues that despite this, Maria Clara's feminine ideals do not necessarily mean that Filipinas have blindly followed traditional gender roles imposed by this idealization but rather her staying power as an icon lies in the space created between the ideals she represents and the ever-changing gender roles and experiences of Filipinos. She serves as an example of the historically gendered lives and experiences of the Philippines (Hau 118).

Sanchez postulated that Rizal's construction of Maria Clara's character in his novel represents a romantic ideal of a Filipina woman that resembles much more a European literary model than a Filipino one (4). Literary productions and periodicals decades after, contributed to the entanglement of fiction and reality and contemporary forms of media in Tagalog, even more, emphasizing the importance of good, simple, submissive women from the countryside (Sanchez). As a fictional character, heightened in continuous adaptations, resemblances of her character in both imaginary and real production sites persist in dissemination such as politics, media, and daily interlocution. Her image lives through the nation's imagination in varying degrees and in multiple meanings. Sanchez postulates "Maria Clara edification as a powerful national myth displaced the late 19th-century martyrdom model...consequently the use of her figure as a myth allowed them to occupy a paradoxical hegemonic position within the process of nation building symbolically" (Sanchez 4).

These studies critiqued by several scholars offer significant insights into the construction of Maria Clara within Rizal's subconscious and how the Maria Clara character manages to find its way in the subconscious of the 21st century Filipina through literary production, translation

and adaptation, transmedial storytelling, hegemonic discourses in the guise of nation building and the deeply ingrained Filipino-value system inherited through the Spanish colonial period (Hau 125; Sanchez 4; Altez-Abela 198).

To progress the study and offer my in-depth discussion and analysis of Maria Clara as an idealized Filipina, the following section will provide a brief background of the novel. This will facilitate a better understanding of the context in which the literary character emerges from. In doing so, this section will establish the groundwork for the subsequent parts of the study, which will delve into the discussion and serve as a reference point for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

2. Background of Study

The novel begins with its protagonist Juan Crisostomo Ibarra who returned to the Philippines after learning that the Spaniards imprisoned his father an accusation of subversion by the priest *Padre Damaso*, the novel's antagonist. Ibarra, being educated in Europe, decided to open a school with aspirations of educating his countrymen and raising their consciousness on the abuses of the Spanish regime. Another main character in the story was Ibarra's beloved Maria Clara, his lover since childhood who came from a family of high social status, his father *Capitan Tiago* sent her to the *Beaterio de Santa Clara*, run by the nuns where she was trained by the sisters to be a pious, lovely woman as was vividly described by the author in several chapters of the story. Eventually, *Padre Damaso*, in fear that Ibarra may convince the people to revolt against the Spanish government, accused him just like his father of being subversive. *Maria Clara* to protect a family secret, that of her being the daughter of the friar *Padre Damaso* who raped her mother and conceived her was framed to betray Ibarra. Ibarra was then thrown into prison. To lure the people and appease the brewing revolution, the government published his death. *Maria Clara*, Ibarra's betrothed lover under the impression that he died, confines herself to the nunnery because of guilt and to avoid being married to another man. In the following novel *El Filibusterismo* she became ill from grief, and as tragic as it could be it's also implied that she was raped by *Padre Salvi* which eventually led her to commit suicide.

In many instances, Rizal described the physical attributes of Maria Clara in the novel, comparing her to a pure, untouched soul as delicate as a rose and as precious as a gem. One might think that his projection of Maria Clara portrays a staunch manifestation of his Eurocentric perspective of female beauty.

She was white, perhaps too white. Her eyes, which were almost always cast down, when she raised them testified to the purest of souls, and when she smiled, revealing her small, white teeth, one might be tempted to say that a rose is merely a plant, and ivory just an elephant's tusk. Among the transparent lace around her white and sculpted neck fluttered, as the Tagalogs say, the sparkling eyes of a necklace made up of precious stones. (Rizal 49)

Furthermore, as if the description of her physical attributes was not enough to highlight the place she occupies in Rizal's imagery, he also, even more, put her on a pedestal of privilege. Far from the ordinary women of her time, Maria Clara is almost similar to an aristocratic, her privilege and her family's wealth evident;

Earlier that morning Aunt Isabel and Maria Clara had gone to mass. The latter was elegantly dressed, with a rosary of blue beads worn almost like a bracelet... If we should now go into the home of Maria Clara, a beautiful nest set among trees of orange and ylang-ylang, we should surprise the two young people at a window overlooking the lake, shadowed by flowers and climbing vines which exhaled a delicate perfume. (Rizal 51, 158)

The novel *Noli Me Tangere* in Philippine history has been considered an instrument that instigated the awakening of Filipino consciousness which led to the 1896 Philippine revolution. Due to its historical importance and Jose Rizal being regarded as a patriot and national hero in the Philippines. The government drafted the so-called "*Republic Act No. 1425: An Act To Include In The Curricula Of All Public And Private Schools, Colleges And Universities Courses On The Life, Works And Writings Of Jose Rizal, Particularly His Novels Noli Me Tangere And El Filibusterismo*" (Official Gazette, 1956). which has been enacted since 1956. The promulgation and teachings of such novels in schools operate under the republican agenda of promoting nationalism and social consciousness amongst the younger generation at such an age where a Filipina's mind is still at the bud of social awakening and finding her identity. Through the lens of feminist literary criticisms, I utilized literary and historical analysis to examine the construction and maintenance of the Maria Clara ideology. Through a post-colonial discourse framework, I seek to reclaim the narrative of Maria Clara and bring to the fore the resilience, strength, and perseverance of the 21st-century Filipinas which challenges and dismantles the long-standing shadows of *Maria Clara* that have deeply pervaded the collective consciousness of Filipinas. The romanticized Maria Clara image remains an impediment to Filipina's self-liberation, as it represents an idealized version of Filipina womanhood. Nakpil argues that this idolization is "the greatest misfortune that has befallen Filipino women in the last 100 years" (qtd. in Philippine Tatler, 2019). Therefore, this paper aims to emphasize the continued perpetuation of this hegemonic tool in the socio-political discourse of the Philippines and provoke further analysis of this ideological phenomenon. Subsequently, contributed to the redemption of Maria Clara and the liberation of the 21st- Century Filipinas from the constraints of this image that has plagued their progress for centuries.

3. The Patriarchal Construction of Maria Clara

Patriarchy as theorized by John C. Chasteen "is a hegemonic, omnipresent, inescapable...legacy of colonialism" (65). The concept of honor as it was in the Spanish-Portuguese familial tradition has been assimilated into the Philippine culture after three hundred years of colonization. Similarly, as traditional Spanish and Portuguese sexual ethics confer, women are expected to play a specific social role, that being a pure, virginal, delicate before marriage and a life dedicated to family and their husbands whereas men are expected to uphold the family's honor and provide financially. The concept of honor "where men are supposed to defend specifically by bloodshed the virginity of their daughters and sexual exclusivity of their wives" (Chasteen 65), further reinforces the social construct in which women are meant to be protected and thus are incapable of being independent. "Patriarchy is the organization and division of all practices and significations in culture in terms of gender and the privileging of one gender over the other, giving males control over female sexuality,

fertility, and labor” (Ebert 19). Anchoring this argument in the psychoanalytic feminist theory from a Freudian perspective which theorized that the development of female subjectivity is brought about by the depiction of the world as a society run by men and male dominance is further strengthened by constructing the image of women as the nurturing and affectionate one, more so in how “our sense of self, and our political loyalties and attachments are influenced by unconscious drives and ordered by symbolic structures that are beyond the purview of individual agency” (Zakin). The construction of Maria Clara as the “innocent, virgin-lily, ideal and pure girl” (qtd. In Terrenal, 1976, 2). in-shifting cultures in the post-colonial Philippine context represents the enduring patriarchal hegemony established by the Spaniards and how it fulfills the unconscious drive and desire to have a symbolic and cultural representation that the nation can idolize is manifested by the immortality of that character in the Philippine socio-political discourse. In the notion of the Filipino’s consciousness, Maria Clara was a good daughter, a delicate woman, and a martyr, which was all straightforward to substantiate as an exemplary Filipina under the hegemony of patriarchy.

Consequently, to sustain this hegemonic discourse the need to deploy a patriarchal discourse both in private and public spheres is necessary and Maria Clara’s imagery is a powerful tool that has long served the patriarchy for more than a century and persists even today. It is common to hear Maria Clara attributes frequently highlighted in social discourses to praise Filipinas who are modest and silent and to condemn audacious and outspoken women. The image of the “*dalagang pilipina*” loosely translated to a young ideal Filipina woman still equates in the general consciousness of Philippine society as someone modest, silent, pure, meek, and loyal to her husband and children. The assimilation of these gendered stories in both real-life and fictional situations reinforces their establishment in our cultural foundation. Terrenal argues that Rizal never intended to depict an ideal woman nor to relegate *Maria Clara* as the ideal Filipina woman (3). When one reads her character in the context of *Noli Me Tangere* and her sufferings, the betrayals, and the abuse that she experienced under the friars, one can assume that she is a juxtaposition of Rizal’s motherland, that *Maria Clara* is the Philippines embodied. It emphasized that *Noli Me Tangere* “produced through the heroine, a vision of Filipino life and all its aspects, but most especially in its political-social-aspect” (qtd, in Terrenal, 1976, 3). How then did Maria Clara as vividly described by the author as an “innocent, virgin-lily, ideal and pure girl” (qtd. in Terrenal, 1976, 2). reached this level of immortality and became a stock figure that reaches and perpetuates in Philippine society even today. Joaquin emphasized, “In the 1920s, Maria Clara turned into a sentimental stock figure. In turn, the succeeding generation evaluated her not as a paragon but as a caricature” (qtd. in Terrenal, 1976, 3).

The processes at play in the representation of Maria Clara in both *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* carry distinct meanings and are intertextually linked. Despite the passage of time, the patriarchal discourse in these works lingers and poses challenges to dismantling its residual effects on contemporary meaning-making practices. Her emblematic feminine traits persist across various Philippine society strata and perpetuate a patriarchal agenda of female subjugation. This ideal is effectively disseminated through calculated and strategic means, particularly in depictions of women within media and contemporary fiction. The dominant narrative that has monopolized Philippine national television for years exemplifies women needing rescuing, martyr mothers prevailing, and women prioritizing family above all else,

reinforcing the archetype of the virtuous Filipina. Hau argues that María Clara's circulation is enabled by four processes: translation and adaptation, temporalization, commodification, and transmediality (Hau 151). These four processes have immortalized her across diverse cultural layers of society regardless of gender and social class. Her image has been adapted in all forms and catered to multiple audiences, agendas, and propaganda. Transmediality allows for new stories and characterizations of María Clara to be created...continues to evoke nostalgia and cultural heritage in the Philippines and across the Filipino diaspora, enjoying a person-like existence that proliferates in different forms across different platforms (Hau, 151).

Delineating these arguments, the construction of Maria Clara embodies a patriarchal discourse that was established during the period of colonization, and this deeply ingrained patriarchal system is so pervasive in Philippine society that the prevailing concept of the ideal Filipina continues to mirror the characteristics of Maria Clara. As such, Maria Clara serves as an effective vehicle employed by the patriarchy to maintain and reinforce its hold in society, solidifying its continued dominance in the Philippine post-colonial society.

Persisting the “perfect” image of Maria Clara in Religion and Education

“Religion offers one of the clearest examples of cultural hegemony...indigenous people accepted the Europeans as the true religion” (Chasteen 63). In prehispanic times as opposed to what Spanish colonizers had claimed where *Las Islas Filipinas* needed to be modernized, the Philippines already had its own political, social, and economic structure in place. In this social structure, “there had always been an egalitarian relationship not only between husband and wife...education was an opportunity for both sexes” (Titgemeyer). Women enjoy a position in society that is equal to that of men. One primary example of this is the existence of the so-called *Babaylans*. The *Babaylans* in pre-Hispanic times were shamans, priestesses, and the healers. Titgemeyer emphasized that the “*Babaylan* was highly respected as priestess or religious practitioner... Although differing in name, every tribe had its religious practitioners, who were preferred to men” (98). Isabelo Delos Reyes, the first Filipino folklorist, and a member of *La Solidaridad* a publication of a group of Filipino exiles in Spain who aimed to bring to the *Cortes* the needs of its colonies such as the Philippines, wrote an essay in 1898 titled “*La Mujer Filipina*” The Filipino Woman, affirming the consensus in pre-Hispanic times “it is a general opinion that the woman is superior to the man in the Philippines, morally speaking. She is more intelligent. That is why the husband is always seen as dominated” (qtd. in Sanchez 4). Additionally, the worth of virginity was not highly regarded and it was common for women to lose their virginity before marriage, and unmarried women did not face any stigmatization, nor did they lose their value as women (Sanchez 4; Camacho 54).

From the colonizer's standpoint, the model of this structure doesn't fit their civilized notion of society and women. According to Sanchez, an 1864 book targeted at the middle class titled “*Ang Pagsusulatan ng Magkapatid na si Urbana at Felisa*,” aimed to “civilize” women's bodies by teaching strict codes of good manners and etiquette, emphasizing desirable behaviors such as religious devotion, motherhood, domesticity, chastity, virginity, perseverance, and submission to men” (Sanchez 4). When Catholicism was introduced in the Philippines, religion became a powerful hegemonic tool used by the Spaniards to eradicate the Philippines' indigenous societal structures and beliefs. The *Babaylans* were then replaced by religious

figures such as the *Birheng Maria*, *Santa Clara de Asis*, and *Sta. Maria Magdalena*, *Sta. Teresa de Avila*, and all other feminine holy figures that Filipinos through religious conditioning eventually believed figures that they can pray and offer to for the healing of their sickness and souls. The model of the “good mother” forms a great conscious resonance with the feminine figures of *Ave Maria* and the *Madonna* that instill the virtue of suffering for women and the virtue of purity in the name of holiness and the sanctity of marriage. The *prusisyon* (religious processions) and the *semana santa* (holy week) where all these saintly figures are displayed, revered, and prayed to, were all part of the hegemony that prevailed in the colonial era and inevitably forced Filipinos to abandon the concept of *Babaylans* and in turn accepted religion as their way of life including their treatment and regard for women. Comparable to how “enslaved Africans and Indigenous people accepted true religion they have accepted by the same token their status as newcomers to the truth” (Chasteen 63).

The construction of Maria Clara as the idealized Filipina woman, I contend, is an enduring representation of patriarchal hegemony that is anchored, maintained, and perpetuated by religion. In Catholicism where virginity is a sacred concept related to the Virgin Mary the image draws a parallel to how Filipinos visualized and imagined Maria Clara, even Jose Rizal in *Noli Me Tangere* vividly described her in ways and likeness to the Virgin Mary:

The idol of all, Maria Clara grew up amidst smiles and love. The very friars showered her with attention when she appeared in the processions dressed in white, her abundant hair interwoven with tube roses and sampaguitas, with two diminutive wings of silver and gold fastened on the back of her gown and carrying in her hands a pair of white doves tied with blue ribbons. (Rizal 49)

In conjunction, Maria Clara as described by the author is “a loving daughter as well as a good and pious Christian” (Rizal 36). This envisage of Maria Clara served as an ideological construction site that even heightened her position as the perfect representation of the ideal Filipina woman. The massive ideological conditioning reinforced by religion created not just a justification but a moral grounding of this socially reinforced behavior and acquisition of these feminine ideal traits in the Filipina’s consciousness, thereby despite her attempts to sway away or revolt against this image, the deviation from the image, creates, still, an internal moral and social guilt to the Filipina and continues to plagued and lambast her progress in the 21st century.

Another hegemonic tool that perpetuates the persistence of Maria Clara as the ideal Filipina woman is education. “All education institutions were religious, and so if knowledge is power and it is, the church monopolized that power” (Chasteen 63). “In the Philippines, the Catholic schools are such an integral and important component of education. There are Catholic schools in all levels of education” (Aguas). It is unsurprising that the image of Maria Clara found its way through education and was immortalized in the minds of Filipina women. Institutional policies such as the enactment of the *Republic Act no 1452* which mandated schools to include in the curriculum the life and works of Rizal since 1956 including primarily *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* ingrained these concepts in the education sphere. The adaptation and transformation of these literary pieces in these educational institutions can be

stated as an active nest of ideological propagation of Maria Clara, It is worth noting that educational institutions in the Philippines are predominantly built and established within religious parameters, leading to the active promotion and reinforcement of religious beliefs that align with patriarchal beliefs, even within the curriculum.

Fusing the construct of patriarchy within the intricate web of postmodern feminist cultural theory and a nuanced understanding of how power dynamics shape our social structures and how these structures perpetuate systemic inequalities, institutionally. One can trace how Maria Clara continued to persist even in the Philippine education system. Ebert emphasized that “mass-produced texts notably popular novels in the build of romantic narratives further produce gendered subjectivity where women are always in a subordinate position” (19). *Noli Me Tangere* by Jose Rizal has always been treated as a political novel under the construct of a romantic narrative between *Maria Clara* and *Crisostomo Ibarra*. “The most powerful texts for reproducing gender distinctions are romance narratives, which are crucial sites for the operation of patriarchal ideology” (Ebert 21). The narrative in which *Maria Clara* has betrayed *Crisostomo Ibarra* for the sake of keeping her family’s honor (that her mother was raped by *Padre Damaso* and she was conceived by this abuse) and resigning herself to the nunnery after learning about *Ibarra’s* death further reinforce the ideology that when a woman’s dignity was compromised and she is without the presence or companionship of men or a lover, she has no sense of value and her essence as a woman is devalued by society. The postmodern feminist cultural theory postulates “the subject as produced through signifying practices which precede her and not as the originator of idea... the existence of meanings in social relations situates the individual in the world” (Ebert 23). The intelligible meanings of *Maria Clara* were structured by the signifying practices under the patriarchal order that men rule and that women are supposed to complement men’s existence. Consequently, she is situated as the ideal Filipina, shaping the collective consciousness of Philippine society.

Reclaiming Maria Clara and the 21st-Century Filipina Feminine Ideal

In an attempt to reclaim the *Maria Clara* narrative, and this is by no means exhaustive but rather a proposal, a meandering to once again venture, to shift the central narrative constructed by hegemonic religious and patriarchal discourses to the periphery.

Jose Rizal the author of the novel *Noli Me Tangere*, realized early on in his correspondence titled “*Letter to the Women of Malolos*” the error of his convictions about the women of the Philippines to quote:

“When I wrote Noli Me Tangere, I asked myself the question whether bravery was a common thing in the girls of our people...it is true, an abundance of girls with agreeable manners, beautiful ways, and modest demeanor, but there was in all an admixture of servitude and deference to the words or whims of their so-called "spiritual fathers", however, when the news of what happened at Malolos reached us, I saw my error, and great was my rejoicing. Now that you have responded to our first appeal in the interest of the welfare of the people; now that you have set an example to those who, like you, long to have their eyes opened and be delivered from servitude, new hopes

are awakened in us and we now even dare to face adversity, because we have you for our allies and our confidence of victory” (Rizal).

The historical context behind Rizal's correspondence addressed to the Women of Malolos is an account that lacks a definitive central theme and subject, who are they, and why are they being praised by Rizal? Albeit, for most parts in both historical and national discourses they are briefly identified as the Women of Malolos who established a school and challenged the friars, these trivial remarks fail to exemplify the profound importance of their actions and their role in catalyzing the 1896 Philippine revolution. Historically, despite being acknowledged, the Women of Malolos has not been given the commendation and comprehensive examination it merits in the historical literature and Philippine studies for a prolonged period. The historical attention accorded to the Women of Malolos, and their accomplishments remained insufficient until 2004, when Nicanor Tiongson's comprehensive historical narrative brought them into the spotlight, finally affording them the recognition that they rightfully deserved in his book *Women of Malolos*.

The Women of Malolos is a group consisting of approximately 20 young women hailing from Malolos, famously known as the "Women of Malolos," who boldly resolved to challenge the authority of the friars. In 1888, they asked their friar Fray Felipe Garcia, for permission to open a night school in the wealthy Pariancillo enclave of the town where, at their expense and in the company of their mothers, they could learn the Spanish language. However, Fray Felipe denied the request, knowing that the teaching of Spanish in the archipelago had been deliberately ignored by the friars, who feared that it would lead to an enlightened and questioning population.

Undeterred, the Women of Malolos waited for a more opportune time to make their request known, and it came when Governor-General Valeriano Weyler visited Malolos during his official tour of Bulacan. Breaking precedent by directly petitioning the governor-general, their resolute determination paid off, and their petition was granted. The night school opened in early January 1889 under the guidance and support of Teodoro Sandico, the teacher from Pandacan who had helped draft the letter to the governor-general.

The Women of Malolos' defiance of the friars' authority was a seminal moment in Philippine history, and it inspired leaders such as *Jose Rizal* and *Graciano Lopez-Jaena* to extol their bravery and publish their stories in newspapers such as *La Solidaridad*. Rizal, then in London and already a revered leader of the reform movement, wrote his famous Tagalog epistolary "*Sa mga Kababayang Dalaga sa Malolos*" which translates as "Letter to the Women of Malolos" to recognize their courage and acknowledge his early impression that young Filipino women were "faded plants sown and reared in darkness." (Rizal) Their defiance would metamorphose into the battlefields of the 1896 revolution, where their counterparts would take up arms and fight for Philippine independence.

The contributions of the *Women of Malolos* serve as a powerful testament to the agency and resilience of Filipina women, even then and even amid colonial oppression. Despite Rizal's initial perception that they were "weeded flowers," the *Women of Malolos*, much like *Maria Clara* who defied *Padre Damaso* and entered the convent, which history and public perception assumed a form of subservient, on the contrary, graciously, and fearlessly exhibited a bold act

of defiance that challenged patriarchal perspectives of her supposed passivity. The Women of Malolos, furthermore, utilized the agency and privileges available to them at the time to claim their right to education and liberation from ignorance. It can be argued that despite archive images of them dressed in clad Eurocentric dresses during the Spanish colonial period, behind those grand white dresses lies within them the spirit and qualities of *la mujer indigena* of the prehispanic time, bold, resolved, and resilient.

The deviation of Filipinas from the Maria Clara caricature can also be exemplified through the historical account of the *Babaylans*, who were shamans, priestesses, and healers who held positions of power in pre-Hispanic Philippine society. During the beginning of colonial occupation, the *Babaylans* became the main target of the missionaries, who sought to impose a new model of womanhood among the natives, turning them into social pariahs and witches. Despite this, the *Babaylans* continued to engage in punctual uprisings and strategic defiance, relocating themselves into new categories proposed by the Catholic order in terms of feminine spiritual activity. This led to the phenomenon of *beats* or *recogidas*, where native women chose to seclude themselves from civil life, as well as the persistent demand for the opening of lay religious congregations or *beaterios*, which were seen as a form of authentic agency for numerous native women (Santiago; Cruz; Sanchez). The *Babaylans* and their descendants demonstrate the agency of Filipinas and their ability to resist and subvert oppressive models of womanhood, as they continue to exercise their agency and carve out their own spaces for spiritual and social activity.

These selective accounts challenge the notion of Maria Clara as the ideal representation of Filipina womanhood. However, patriarchy and its powerful discourse remain a strong force that undermines any attempt to reclaim these alternative narratives. I argue that these alternative histories should be included in educational curricula instead of solely focusing on the literal interpretation of *Noli Me Tangere* in schools. While this approach may not be sufficient to fully dismantle the ideological construction of Maria Clara's image, it can be a step towards challenging and expanding the prevailing narrative.

In the ensuing section, I will situate my arguments and assertions within the framework of Gloria Anzaldua's "mestiza consciousness" to illuminate further pathways to reclaim the Maria Clara narrative and support my propositions.

One can argue that the "new mestiza consciousness" as articulated by Anzaldua is a consciousness that ensues from the borders of a subjectivity that is constructed by "racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination" (Anzaldua 99). The mestiza is continuously assaulted by the collision of cultures, internal conflicts, identity struggle, and linguistic confusion, a state which Anzaldua emphasizes resulted in a "constant state of mental nepantalism...an Aztec word that means torn in between ways... and in a state of perpetual transition" (99). One can assume that the mestiza Anzaldua elucidated is the one who lives and crosses the borders and goes back and forth in between, carrying, contradicting, living multiple cultures within her "*me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio, estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan simultáneamente*" (Anzaldua 99).

Anzaldua argues that the new mestiza consciousness is "not a way of life" (99) it is neither a coming together of multiple cultures, nor a stabilization of conflicting powers but rather a creation of new territory, a new space, and consciousness where she proposed a methodology in which one goes on an inner journey to accept the plurality of oneself. "And if

going home is denied me, then I will have to stand and claim my space making a new culture-- *una cultura mestiza* with my own lumber, my own bricks and own mortar” (Anzaldúa 44).

Anzaldúa emphasized that to achieve this, one must “confront the shadow beast in the mirror ... uncover the lie” (44). and “enter the serpent” (45). Anzaldúa reclaims the *historia* of all the Indigenous ancestors that were trivialized by the Aztra-Mexica patriarchy and the Christian conquerors. The new mestiza reframes and reclaims the narratives of *Malinali*, *La Llorona*, and *Virgen de Guadalupe*. The reclaiming process of these lost narratives of one’s ancestors, traditions, and rituals legitimizing its *historias*, and rejecting the white dominant narratives of their culture is a prerequisite in achieving the Coatlicue state. A state where one faces the fears that shackle oneself from being free, confronting the duality, the multiplicity of cultures within, and emerging from that undertaking lies the “awareness, knowledge, the act of being seen... and seeing through an experience” (64). where one arrives at the acceptance and awareness of her plurality.

The 21st-century Filipina and her identity are continuously besieged by internal conflicts, trapped by the patriarchy, by her religion, by post-colonial discourses, and by her education. She is in perpetual transition, negotiating her moral ground, her religion, and her femininity. The Maria Clara archetype consistently haunts her and impedes her progress, but she has long struggled with great resolve to overcome these hindrances and she has long created her “*una cultura meztisa*” She has long built this new territory for herself, one that continuously attempts to liberate herself from any colonial influences. The 21st-century Filipinas have long occupied this liminal space, creating their realm of resistance to patriarchy and they have proved to live very contrasting lives to that of the image of Maria Clara as fragile, meek, passive, and subservient.

The past decades have seen a remarkable demographic shift among Filipinas who have ventured beyond their national borders in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. These dauntless women have taken on the mantle of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), contributing significantly to the global workforce. According to the UN Women fact sheet Over the last 20 years, approximately 172,000 Filipino women migrant workers (WMWs) were deployed overseas as new hires. In 2004, WMWs made up three-fourths of newly hired workers. Currently, the number of WMWs has decreased, although they still outnumber men in total deployment (UNWomen). To a great extent, the modern-day Filipinas have shattered by and large the archaic notion of Maria Clara, the frail and delicate flower of Rizal’s. Filipinas have braved unfamiliar lands, navigated new cultures, and overcome countless obstacles to succeed in their workplaces. They have proven themselves capable, displaying a level of resilience that contrasts with the mere description relegated by social norms to the ideal Filipina.

Furthermore, Filipinas have actively challenged and rejected the notion of subservience by occupying positions of power. This is evident by the 1986 people power revolution, where Cory Aquino successfully upended dictatorship, as well as the election of two female presidents and the significant number of women involved in politics, all of which have greatly contributed to reducing the gender gap in the Philippines. Additionally, Filipinas have long been engaged in the fight against the culture of silence surrounding rape and abuse, well before the global

solidarity sparked by the #MeToo movement. The "seafarers" movement, which originated in the Philippines, is one such example of this resistance. Filipina seafarers have long navigated valiantly this male-dominated world, and accounts of sexual harassment compelled them to confront this enduring issue and organize a movement to fight sexual harassment in their field (Tangi). Likewise, Filipinas have launched numerous campaigns, such as #BabaeAko, (I'm a woman) as a means of opposing the consistently derogatory, misogynist, and sexist remarks against women made by former President Rodrigo Duterte, who throughout his term has continuously marginalized women, positioning them as secondary to men. The #BabaeAko movement drives public support and catalyzes opinions to reiterate that women are not secondary to men and would not remain silent in this blatant attack against women. The movement "*#BabaeAko... Para sa bayang makatarungan at malaya. Lalaban ako*" (CNN Philippines) I'm a woman and for a just and free country, I will fight, vocalized by Judy Taguiwalo in social media, she garnered significant attention and support from Filipina women, who were moved to take up the cause. Their commitment to the movement demonstrated the power and agency of Filipina women in demanding justice and equity.

I argue that these accounts demonstrate a clear occupation of the Borderlands, the imaginary space that Anzaldúa argues as that territory to reclaim contested notions imposed by the colonial hegemony and patriarchy. Drawing attention to these unacknowledged truths and the Borderland work of the 21st-century Filipinas can help reclaim and set free the long-standing narrative of what Filipina women should be.

4. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by several factors. First, it primarily focuses on literary analysis, specifically examining Maria Clara's narrative through feminist and post-colonial frameworks. As such, it does not include empirical data or direct insights from contemporary Filipinas, which could provide additional perspectives. Second, the study's scope is restricted to historical and cultural influences of Spanish colonization, excluding a broader examination of modern transnational influences on Filipina identity. Lastly, while this study proposes pathways to reclaim Maria Clara's narrative, it recognizes the challenges of fully addressing deep-seated societal norms in a single analysis. Future research may expand these discussions to include other marginalized identities and voices.

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Marital Family Violence and Mental Health: Exploring the Role of Natal Family Support and Working Status on Suicidal Ideation and Spiritual Wellbeing Among Women Survivors in India

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Abstract

Violence against women (VAW) is on a rise globally. India recorded a 31.36% increase in incidents of crimes against women from 2016 to 2022. VAW, which is a form of gender-based violence (GBV), prevents women from accessing resources like education, employment, health facilities, legal redressal, etc. Domestic Violence (DV), the most prevalent form of GBV, affects women irrespective of age, caste, religion, socio-economic status, educational background, geographical location, and other identities. Abuse within the home manifests in many forms including physical, emotional, or mental, sexual, and economic abuse. In case of marital family violence (MFV) which is violence a woman faces in her marital home, several factors play a role in the impact it has on the survivor's mental health.

The study employs a cross-sectional and exploratory research design to gain a more nuanced understanding of marital family violence. It determines the role natal family support and working status play on mental health outcomes, namely, suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing of MFV women survivors. Additionally, it investigates whether ego resiliency of survivors in conjunction with their abusive situation determines impact over their mental health.

Experiences of 72 adult women survivors of MFV aged between 21 and 35 years have been gathered through simple purposive sampling from local NGOs that work to stop VAW and GBV. Data has been collected through standardized questionnaires, including, Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (ASIQ), Spiritual Wellbeing Scale and The Ego Resilience Scale and analysed using the SPSS software.

Results indicate no significant difference between the working and non-working groups in terms of their suicidal ideation or spiritual wellbeing. This can be because majority women do not earn substantially to contribute to their economic independence and wellbeing. However, natal family support plays a role in the overall spiritual and existential well-being of survivors, with a greater sense of wellbeing being prevalent amongst those who get some kind of support from natal family members as opposed to those who do not. Natal family support on the other hand, does not play a significant role in suicidal ideation among survivors, indicating the grave impact that violence can have on one's mental health despite a social support system.

Since marital family violence is the most reported form of DV, and its impact on mental health of survivors is often dependent on their social support system, the study throws important light on natal family support as a means of combating MFV.

Keywords: gender-based violence, domestic violence, marital family violence, mental health outcomes, natal family support

1. Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is rampant across the globe and occurs irrespective of age, caste, religion, culture, socio-economic status, educational background,

geographical location, and sexual identity. Latest national statistics show that the prevalence of VAWG increased by 31.36% during a seven-year period, from 338,954 incidents in 2016 to 4,45,256 cases in 2022 (NCRB, 2022).

Domestic violence (DV) is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence (GBV) and is considered a “public health epidemic” (WHO, 2002). DV is the omission or commission of any act or conduct against a woman by any of her male or female relatives living in a domestic relationship, that harms, injures, harasses, threatens, or endangers her (PWDVA, 2005). It manifests in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse.

Marital family violence (MFV) is a specific form of domestic violence that occurs within the context of a marriage or a marital family setting. It encompasses a range of abusive behaviours by one partner towards the other and may include violence by other marital family members. MFV is a pervasive issue that requires a comprehensive approach to address.

1.1 Role of Natal Family Support in Coping with Abuse

The literature highlights the critical role of natal family support in helping women cope with the violence. Social support is important for the survivor in coping with the violence and even in reducing the violence (Fagan 1989). Natal family support is linked to better psychological outcomes for women experiencing marital violence, providing emotional validation, and reducing feelings of isolation and helplessness, thus emphasizing the importance of supportive relationships in coping with intimate partner violence (Liang et. al., 2005).

In many cultures, natal family support is crucial due to societal norms that stigmatize divorce and discourage women from leaving abusive marriages (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Intersectional factors such as caste, class, and education level influence the extent and effectiveness of natal family support (Crenshaw, 1991). Financial support from the natal family can offer a critical safety net, enabling women to leave abusive relationships and gain economic independence (Goodman et. al., 2009). Moreover, natal families often facilitate access to legal resources and social services, enhancing women's ability to navigate the legal system and secure protection (Pandey, et. al., 2009).

In terms of mental health outcomes, natal family support has been shown to significantly reduce suicidal ideation in women experiencing marital violence. Emotional support provides a sense of belonging and validation, while financial support can alleviate stress related to economic dependency on the abuser (O'Donnell et al., 2003). Support from the natal family can enhance spiritual well-being by providing a stable foundation from which women can explore and develop their spiritual beliefs (Ellison et al., 2001).

Additionally, there are several theoretical frameworks that throw light upon the importance of natal family support in coping with violence. The Social Support Theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985) provides a foundational understanding of how social support mitigates stress. It posits that social support networks, such as natal families, play a crucial role in buffering the negative effects of stressful life events, including domestic violence. The Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1981) provides a framework which emphasizes the multiple environmental systems that influence individual behaviour and well-being. Natal family support is thus part of the microsystem impacting a woman's response to marital violence.

1.2 Role of Ego Resiliency in Coping with Abuse

Ego resilience gives women who have experienced marital abuse the capacity to overcome traumatic events and retain their inner fortitude and resolve, which aids in their coping. This is in keeping with the protective factor model of resilience which describes how protection and risk factors interact to lower the likelihood of a negative outcome and attenuate the impact of risk exposure (O'Leary, 1998). This resilience model suggests that despite adverse or unpleasant life conditions, these protective variables promote positive results and healthy personality traits (Bonanno, 2004; Ungar, 2004).

High ego resiliency has shown to enable better coping strategies, reducing the likelihood of severe psychological distress (Block & Kremen, 1996). The interaction between ego resiliency and external support systems such as natal family and employment, can create a robust buffer against the negative impacts of marital violence. There does exist a synergistic effect of internal resilience and external support (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). In a study, however, the association between familial violence exposure and suicide ideation was found to be significantly mediated by anger, aggression, sadness, and hopelessness; but ego resilience did not play a mediating role in this relationship (Kim, 2021).

1.3 Role of Working Status in Coping with Abuse

Studies indicate that work and financial independence can substantially mitigate negative mental health outcomes in survivors of domestic violence. Employment can reduce suicidal ideation by enhancing financial independence, self-esteem, and social networks. It provides a sense of purpose and routine, which are protective factors against suicidal thoughts (Klomek et al., 2010). Being employed can also positively impact spiritual well-being by offering opportunities for social interaction and personal growth, contributing to a holistic sense of well-being. Employment not only contributes to economic stability but also enables women to engage more deeply in spiritual or religious communities, enhancing their sense of well-being.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

A literature review reveals that most studies are qualitative and have focused on intimate partner violence and its mental health implications. Thereby, it creates the need to delve deeper into the impact of natal family support and working status, and the role of resilience in mental health outcomes of survivors. Considering this, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To examine if there is any significant difference between MFV women survivors getting support from their natal family and MFV women survivors not getting support from their natal family in terms of their suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing.
- ii. To examine if there is any significant difference between working and non-working MFV women survivors in terms of their suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing.
- iii. To examine if natal family support combined with working status has a significant effect on the suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing of MFV women survivors.
- iv. To examine the relationship between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors in terms of natal family support and working status.

- v. To examine the role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation, and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors with natal family support and MFV women survivors without natal family support.
- vi. To examine the role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation, and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are working and MFV women survivors who are non-working.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Operational Definitions

The variables used in the present study have been operationalized conceptually according to the following:

Marital Family Violence (MFV) refers to domestic violence (physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse) that is being perpetrated by the members of a woman's marital family who share a household with her. Perpetrators could include a woman's husband, parents-in-law, siblings-in-law, grandparents-in-law, aunts and uncles-in-law, and any other relatives associated with the husband's parental or adopted family.

Women survivors in the study refer to women who have faced or experienced gender-based violence or abuse over a considerable period in their family and have either moved out of the abusive situation or are still in the abusive situation and coping with the abuse.

Ego Resiliency is a personality trait characterized by an individual's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, recover from stress, and maintain psychological health.

Suicidal Ideation, refers to a range of thoughts, wishes, and unusual preoccupation with death and suicide. It can be a critical indicator of severe psychological distress.

Spiritual Wellbeing refers to the human need for meaning, purpose and connection to something greater than us (beyond physical and psychological wellbeing), often providing a coping mechanism in times of stress.

Natal Family Support refers to the emotional, financial, and social assistance provided by a woman's family of origin (parents, siblings, extended relatives) or adopted family in times of marital distress.

Working Status refers to whether a woman is employed or unemployed, which can influence her financial independence, self-esteem, and access to social networks.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

H_{01a} – There will be no significant effect of natal family support on suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors.

H_{01b} – There will be no significant effect of natal family support on spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors.

H_{02a} – There will be no significant effect of working status on suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors.

H_{02b} – There will be no significant effect of working status on spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors.

H_{03a} – There will be no significant combined effect of natal family support and working status on suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors.

H_{03b} – There will be no significant combined effect of natal family support and working status on spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors.

H_{04a} – There will be no significant correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors with natal family support.

H_{04b} – There will be no significant correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors without natal family support.

H_{04c} – There will be no significant correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are working.

H_{04d} – There will be no significant correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are non-working.

H_{05a} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors with natal family support.

H_{05b} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors without natal family support.

H_{05c} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors with natal family support.

H_{05d} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors without natal family support.

H_{05e} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors who are working.

H_{05f} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors who are non-working.

H_{05g} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are working.

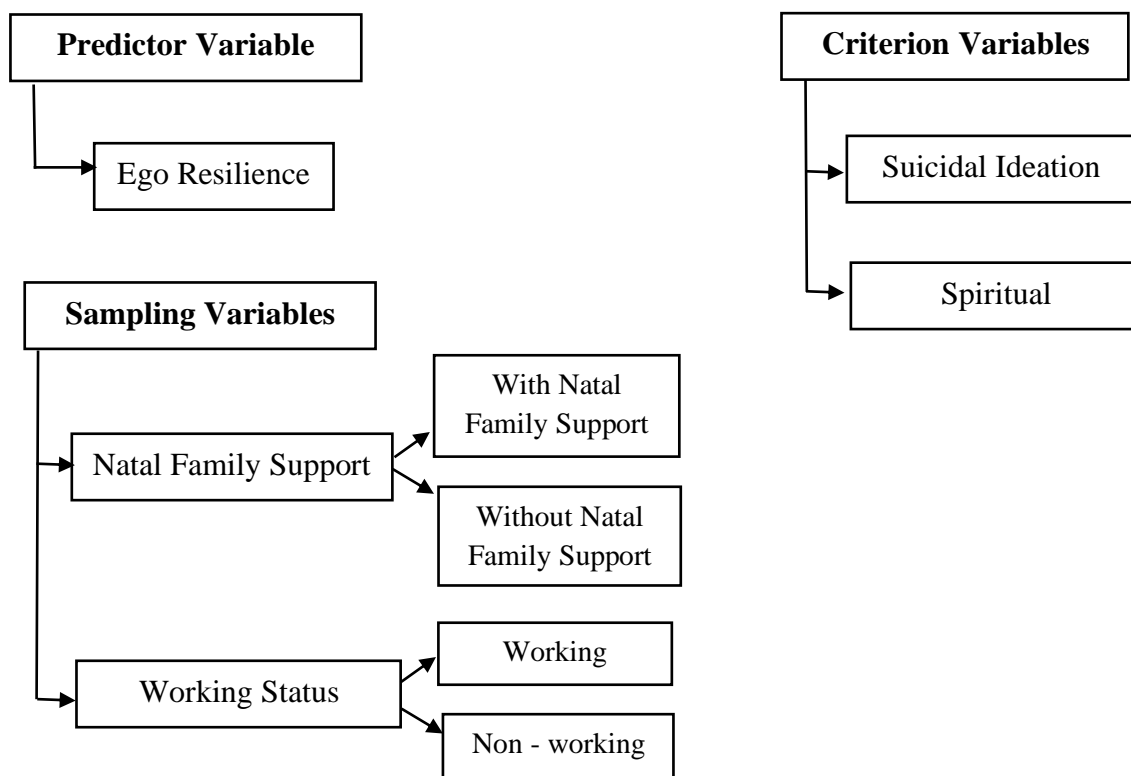
H_{05h} – There will be no significant role of ego resiliency in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are non-working.

2.3 Research Design

The study employed the following research designs to investigate the above-mentioned hypotheses:

- i. Comparative Research Design to compare suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing in MFV women survivors with and without natal family support and MFV women survivors who are working and non-working.
- ii. Exploratory Research Design to explore nuances of marital family violence and its mental health impact on women survivors in terms of natal family support and working status.

- iii. Correlational Research Design to explore correlations between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing, as well as to investigate how well ego resiliency predicts each of these two mental health outcomes in the different samples of MFV women survivors.
- iv. 2 x 2 Factorial Research Design to look at the effect of 2 levels of the independent variables on the dependent variables.



2.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The current study includes a sample of 72 women survivors of marital family violence. The simple purposive sampling method was used to recruit women survivors of MFV from community-based organizations across West Bengal. Women aged between 21 and 35 years, residing in West Bengal and reporting continual experiences of marital family violence for at least 1 year were included in the study. Women who have been married only once at or after 18 years of age and belonging to the middle and lower socio-economic statuses were selected.

2.5 Tools

Data was collected using standardized questionnaires and statistical tools as follows and then analysed quantitatively using the SPSS software:

- i. Ego resilience was measured using the Ego Resilience Scale constructed by J. Block & Kremen (1996). The scale has an overall reliability coefficient of 0.76.
- ii. Suicidal ideation was measured using the Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (ASIQ) constructed by W.M. Reynolds (1991). The scale has a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.81, internal consistency coefficient of 0.97 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.86.

- iii. Spiritual wellbeing was measured by the Spiritual Wellbeing Scale (SWBS) constructed by Paloutzian & Ellison (1982). It is a self-report instrument with a test-retest reliability of 0.85.
- iv. Socio-economic status was measured using the Modified Kuppaswamy Socio-economic Status Scale 2021.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

All possible ethical standards were followed during the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the interviews. Each participant was notified that their participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

3. Results and Discussion

A 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA (Table 1) indicates no significant main effect for natal family support, $F([1], [68]) = [0.01], p = [.906]$; no significant main effect for working status, $F([1], [68]) = [0.54], p = [.467]$; and no significant interaction between natal family support and working status, $F([1], [68]) = [0.53], p = [.470]$. This confirms the initial hypotheses that neither of the two sampling variables independently or combinedly would significantly affect suicidal ideation in survivors.

Table 1: Showing the main and combined effect of natal family support and working status on suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Natal Family Support	1.799	1	1.799	.014	.906
Work Status	68.257	1	68.257	.536	.467
Natal Family Support * Working Status	67.256	1	67.256	.528	.470

A 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA (Table 2) indicates a significant main effect for natal family support, $F([1], [68]) = [4.14], p = [.046]$; no significant main effect for working status, $F([1], [68]) = [0.64], p = [.802]$; and no significant interaction between natal family support and working status, $F([1], [68]) = [0.02], p = [.894]$. This rejects the initial hypothesis that natal family support by itself would not significantly affect spiritual wellbeing in the survivors, while also confirming that working status or the combined effect of both would not significantly affect spiritual wellbeing in the survivors.

Table 2: Showing the main and combined effect of natal family support and working status on spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Natal Family Support	1135.139	1	1135.139	4.140	.046 *
Work Status	17.425	1	17.425	.064	.802
Natal Family Support * Work Status	4.883	1	4.883	.018	.894

* Significant at the 0.05 level of confidence

A Pearson Correlation Coefficient revealed:

No significant correlations between Suicidal Ideation and Spiritual Wellbeing in MFV women survivors with natal family and MFV women survivors without natal family support (Tables 3a and 3b).

Table 3a: Showing the correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors with natal family support

Variables	R Value
Suicidal Ideation X Spiritual Wellbeing	-.250

Table 3b: Showing the correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors without natal family support

Variables	R Value
Suicidal Ideation X Spiritual Wellbeing	.081

No significant correlations between Suicidal Ideation and Spiritual Wellbeing in working MFV women survivors and non-working MFV women survivors (Tables 3c and 3d).

Table 3c: Showing the correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are working

Variables	R Value
Suicidal Ideation X Spiritual Wellbeing	-.176

Table 3d: Showing the correlation between suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are non-working

Variables	R Value
Suicidal Ideation X Spiritual Wellbeing	-.169

In the present study, the predictive relationships of ego resilience with suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing in women survivors of MFV with and without natal family support and those working and non-working were examined using separate simple linear regression models. The linear regression analyses revealed the following results:

An R^2 of 0.005 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 0.5% of the variance in suicidal ideation among survivors of MFV with natal family support (Table 4a); an R^2 of 0.056 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 5.6% of the variance in spiritual wellbeing among women survivors with natal family support (Table 4b); an R^2 of 0.038 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 3.8% of the variance in suicidal ideation among women survivors without natal family support (Table 4c); an R^2 of 0.017 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 1.7% of the variance in spiritual wellbeing among women survivors of MFV without natal family support (Table 4d); an R^2 of 0.006 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 0.6% of the variance in suicidal ideation among survivors who are working (Table 4e); an R^2 of 0.012 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 1.2% of the variance in spiritual wellbeing among survivors who are working (Table 4f); an R^2 of 0.024 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately 2.4% of the variance in suicidal ideation among women survivors who are not working (Table 4g); and an R^2 of 0.134 suggests that ego resilience accounts for approximately

13.4% of the variance in spiritual wellbeing among women survivors of MFV who are not working (Table 4h).

Table 4a: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors with natal family support

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.070 ^a	.005	-.016	12.101

Table 4b: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors with natal family support

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.236 ^a	.056	.036	16.693

Table 4c: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors without natal family support

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.194 ^a	.038	-.008	9.467

Table 4d: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors without natal family support

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.131 ^a	.017	-.030	14.978

Table 4e: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors who are working

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.076 ^a	.006	-.017	11.268

Table 4f: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are working

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.108 ^a	.012	-.011	16.389

Table 4g: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting suicidal ideation among MFV women survivors who are non-working

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.156 ^a	.024	-.016	11.274

Table 4h: Showing the role of ego resilience in predicting spiritual wellbeing among MFV women survivors who are non-working

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.366 ^a	.134	.098	16.846

Natal family support plays a significant role in the overall spiritual well-being of survivors, with a greater sense of wellbeing being prevalent amongst those who get some form of support from natal family members. This is consistent with the literature that support from

natal families can foster a sense of safety and security, allowing women to engage in spiritual practices more freely (Ellison et al., 2001). On the other hand, data implies that natal family support does not play a significant role in suicidal ideation among survivors.

Results also indicate no significant difference between the working and non-working groups in terms of their suicidal ideation or spiritual wellbeing. This can be because majority women do not earn substantially to contribute to their economic independence and wellbeing. Additionally, many women in patriarchal household structures, do not have control over their own finances and are not consulted for financial decisions, thus rendering them powerless. Results are further indicative of the grave impact that MFV can have on one's mental health despite the presence of a social support system or a sense of purpose. Additionally, due to the sample size being small, it is possible that, significant correlations could not be obtained between the variables.

In most studies ego resiliency is shown to act as a mediator, enhancing the positive effects of natal family support and working status on both suicidal ideation and spiritual well-being. Results do indicate that ego resilience has predicted suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing in all four samples to some extent, albeit not significantly. This reiterates the fact that internal traits can act as protective factors to some extent, but one needs to delve deeper into the nature and severity of violence, to understand why these protective factors do not always function as desired.

4. Conclusion

In India, the term domestic violence is more than often used to imply spousal abuse or abuse by marital family members. Compared to its high prevalence, marital violence in India is a form of DV that is not studied as much (Bhat & Ullman, 2013). Additionally, social support systems such as family support is an important factor in alleviating negative mental health outcomes and other adverse consequences of intimate partner or marital family violence (Ogbe et al., 2020). Furthermore, working status of women survivors, often associated with their economic independence, plays an important role in how they cope with the abuse. The impact that MFV has on the mental health of women survivors is also often dependent on their own ego resilience. The study hence incorporates factors such as availability of natal family support, working status and ego resilience, to examine how well they predict and are associated with mental health outcomes like suicidal ideation and spiritual wellbeing among the women survivors.

It was hypothesized that natal family support and working status would play crucial roles in reducing suicidal ideation and enhancing spiritual well-being among women survivors of MFV. It was also expected that ego resiliency would further enhance these effects by enabling women to effectively leverage available support and adapt to their circumstances. Even though working status did not play a significant role in determining the mental health outcomes in survivors, natal family support did succeed in improving their spiritual well-being. Chronic abuse in the marital home, coupled with societal stigmas around breaking the marriage, or risking family honour by reporting the incident or taking legal action can act as hindering factors even in the face of external support systems and internal protective factors.

Among all the negative mental health outcomes of MFV, suicidal ideation is quite prevalent in women survivors, while spiritual wellbeing plays an important role in coping with situations of violence. However, results indicate that the degree and severity of the impact depends as much on intrinsic factors such as ego resilience, as it does on environmental factors like social support and economic independence. Future studies need to focus on the nature and severity of abuse, to determine how that impacts functionality of existing protective factors.

The study has some major implications in that it draws from lived experiences of women survivors and brings to light ground realities about the nuances and impact of marital family violence. It increases understanding around the roles of natal family support and working status in combating MFV and can inform intervention strategies and therapeutic models to cater to the unique needs of this population by focusing on internal and external resources available to them.

5. Recommendations

Some recommendations based on the findings of this study include:

- i. Policies and interventions aimed at addressing MFV should work towards strengthening support networks like natal families to provide comprehensive aid to victims. If legal systems better support family networks, the impact of MFV on survivors can be further mitigated.
- ii. Policy efforts should focus on strengthening and promoting economic independence to improve the overall well-being of survivors. Initiatives that enhance the economic stability of women and their natal families can reduce dependency on abusive partners and provide alternatives for those seeking to leave violent relationships. Economic empowerment initiatives should be coupled with mental health and resilience-building programs to maximize benefits.
- iii. Community programs can be designed to strengthen natal family support systems, to better support their members facing domestic violence because an integrated community approach is often successful in combating marital violence.

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