

Salasika

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Why Do Women Skip Fasting During Their Period? Integrating Curriculum Ibadah with a Women's Perspective and the Reinterpretation of Menstruation (Haid)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how female students at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Technology and Business Jakarta understand menstruation in relation to the practice of fasting and other acts of worship, which is based on coursework on campus. This study departs from controversies on social media between 2019 and 2020 concerning the permissibility of fasting for menstruating women. This qualitative research employs a grounded theory approach and collects primary data through in-depth interviews as well as open discussions in classroom learning and Gender Equality and Reproductive Health training. The respondents were aged 17–25 years and had backgrounds of activity in two categories, namely those merely active in the organization, and those active in the organization and have involvement in gender studies and women's movements. The results show that first, female students who argue that menstruating women may fast or perform other acts of worship are considered liberal and as opposing the word of Allah Swt and the Qur'an. Second, female students who have not been involved in women's movements tend to view the prohibition of fasting and other acts of worship as a rule based on the assumption that menstruation is "impure." Third, respondents who are active in gender studies and women's movements argue that fasting during menstruation may be permitted depending on a woman's condition, and they reject the assumption that menstruation is something impure.

KEYWORDS: *fasting during menstruation, menstruation is not impure blood*

INTRODUCTION

The female reproductive system, unlike the male, undergoes regular cyclic changes known as the menstrual cycle, which serves as the body's periodic preparation for ovulation and potential pregnancy. The most noticeable aspect of the female reproductive system is menstruation, or cyclic vaginal bleeding,

which occurs alongside a series of coordinated hormonal changes.¹ Women's reproduction and health are greatly impacted when there are changes in nature, as well as myths that develop and are believed by society.

When there are natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, tornadoes, or earthquakes, as well as disasters resulting from human negligence in managing nature, such as floods or landslides, women experience disproportionate impacts compared to men.² According to Law No. 24 of 2007, there are three types of disasters: natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, hurricanes, landslides), non-natural disasters (disease outbreaks, technological failures, modernization failures), and social disasters (social conflict, riots). It is women who experience multiplied impacts compared to men. In contrast, women's reproduction lasts much longer and leaves marks: menstruation that can last seven days or more, pregnancy for nine months, childbirth that typically takes one or two days, and breastfeeding for up to two years.³ When carrying out reproductive roles, women inevitably experience what is known as the 3M Plus, namely becoming pregnant, giving birth, and breastfeeding, plus menstruation and the postpartum period.⁴

Similarly, the impacts of mining are also experienced disproportionately by women compared to men. In addition to losing economic livelihoods—such as traditional gold mining carried out by Dayak women in South Kalimantan and East Kalimantan prior to the arrival of PT Indo Muro Kencana and PT KEM; palm sugar production that was prohibited by Newmont Nusa Tenggara in Sumbawa; coal mining in South Kalimantan that closed women's access to rubber plantations; Newmont's gold mining in North Sulawesi that resulted in reduced water availability; and fish catches as the main source of income for women fishers that drastically declined due to waste in Buyat Bay, the place where Newmont disposed of its mining waste on the seabed. In addition, Freeport/Rio Tinto mining in West Papua, aside from causing severe impacts on local communities and the environment, has also contributed to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly among women in the mining town of Timika, which has the second-highest number of AIDS cases in Papua.⁵

¹ Dhanalakshmi K. Thiyagarajan, Hajira Basit, Rebecca Jeanmonod. Physiology, Menstrual Cycle. [27 September 2024].

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK500020/>

² Asako Okai. Women are hit hardest in disasters, so why are responses too often gender-blind? Disaster response and recovery doesn't go far enough in addressing their specific needs. [24 Maret 2022]. <https://www.undp.org/blog/women-are-hit-hardest-disasters-so-why-are-responses-too-often-gender-blind>

³ Yulianti Muthmainnah, Ilham Mundzir, Yusron Razak, Nasr Muhammad Arif. Lost In Translating The Divine Message: Different Perspectives Of Indonesian Muslim Feminists On Polygamy Verses In The Qur'an. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*. Vol. 19 (2), December 2025. Page.322. <https://ipcis.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/JIIs/article/view/14563>

⁴ Yulianti Muthmainnah. 3 M (Mengandung, Melahirkan, Menyusui) Hak Siapa?. *Suara Apik*, Edition 32. APIK Jakarta. (2006).

⁵ Down to Earth Nr 56. Perempuan Menderita Dampak Terburuk dalam Pertambangan; Kasus-kasus di Indonesia. [Februari 2003] <https://www.downtoearth-indonesia.org/id/story/perempuan-menderita-dampak-terburuk-dalam-pertambangan-kasus-kasus-di->

Women also experience impacts on their reproductive lives, resulting in disrupted health. In situations such as natural disasters, social disasters, or mining activities, there are always women who are menstruating, giving birth, or in the postpartum period after childbirth. At the same time, access to clean water is limited. In other situations, women’s menstruation is also overshadowed by myths.

Menstruation is a daily reality for millions of women and girls around the globe. A natural biological process, which should dignify women and girls, has become a subject of shame that is rarely discussed. This silence is largely connected to the many myths and stigmatization surrounding menstruation. Despite advances in globalization, several cultures around the world still vilify menstruation and see menstruating women and girls as “dirty” and “impure.” It is evident that most women and girls face several challenges during menstruation, such as the inability to afford sanitary pads, lack of sanitation and handwashing facilities in schools, stigmatization from male peers, and discrimination due to certain taboos and myths attached to menstruation.⁶

The following is a UNICEF⁷ report that documents myths surrounding menstruation among women, collected from various countries:

Myth	Fact
Girls become impure during their period.	Periods are a natural occurrence that signals growth
Girls should not cook or visit sacred places during their period.	There is nothing impure about periods.
Sanitary products should be kept private and covered in paper when purchasing.	Buying sanitary products is similar to buying soap or toothpaste. They are all personal hygiene products.
Girls having their periods should not touch or go near plants. The plant will die if they do so.	Plants do not discriminate. They thrive on good care, like all of us, regardless of who it comes from.
Foods like curd, tamarind, and pickles disturb the menstrual flow.	The food you eat does not decide the flow of your periods.
Girls having their periods should sleep in a separate shed or different room.	Menstruation is not contagious and causes no harm to anyone else in the same room.
Any form of physical activity can disturb the menstrual flow.	Exercise and playing sports can actually help relieve period pain.
A girl should not talk about her	Do you think twice before you talk about

indonesia#:~:text=Perempuan%20menanggung%20tekanan%20fisik%20sekali%20gus,menderita%20atas%20meningkatnya%20resiko%20HIV%2F

⁶ Breaking the Silence: Demystifying Menstruation Myths and Taboos.

<https://endwaterpoverty.org/breaking-the-silence-demystifying-menstruation-myths-and-taboos/>

⁷ UNICEF South Asia. 7 Alarming Myths About Periods We Have to End Now Let's Break the Silence. UNICEF ROSA 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/7-alarming-myths-about-periods-we-have-end-now>

periods in public. If she does so, she will be shamed publicly.	your hair, that eyeliner, the shade of your nail paint? Talking about periods is no different.
Girls who get their periods should drop out of school. ⁸	While dropping out from school due to periods is common for girls around the world, it should not be. UNICEF and partners are working to support menstruating girls by providing sanitation facilities and educational resources. We are encouraging the community to support girls who need to stay in school and feel good about their bodies and themselves.

Table 1.

Other myths that are still strongly believed by women, taught by mothers to their daughters, and practiced by them in almost all parts of the world include:⁹

No	Myth
1.	Women who have their tubes tied experience a decrease in menstrual flow.
2.	Using an IUD (intrauterine device) reduces menstrual flow.
3.	Using birth control pills reduces menstrual flow.
4.	Using tampons during menstruation is unhealthy.
5.	Using a menstrual cup during menstruation is unhealthy.
6.	It is not possible to get pregnant during menstruation.
7.	Having sexual intercourse during menstruation is not appropriate.
8.	Cleaning body hairs (e.g. armpits, legs, vaginal area, etc.) during the menstrual period is not appropriate.
9.	Cutting nails during the menstrual period is not appropriate.
10.	Cutting hair during the menstrual period is not appropriate.
11.	Taking a shower with hot water during menstruation reduces/stops menstrual bleeding.
12.	Taking a shower with cold water during menstruation reduces/stops menstrual bleeding.
13.	To reduce odor during menstruation, the vaginal area (vulva) should be cleaned with scented genital hygiene products.
14.	It is sufficient to change sanitary pads twice a day during menstruation.
15.	The inside of the vagina (vulva) should be washed during menstruation.
16.	Bathing is not recommended during the menstrual period.
17.	Breastfeeding is not allowed during the menstrual period.
18.	Taking painkillers during menstruation causes a decrease or cessation

⁸ UNICEF Australia. Busted. Eight Myths About Periods Let's Break the Silence. <https://www.unicef.org.au/stories/busted-eight-myths-about-periods?srsltid=AfmBOooeJ1MifB9TOra5zdAjPsXwYmS6fM0pxU-DOC2nl8B9hsVbecmb>

⁹ Şeyma Kilci Erciyas, Ebru Cirban Ekrem, and Şirin Çetin. Menstruation Myths Scale: A Scale Development Study. *Gynecology and Obstetrics*. [01 May 2025]. [Volume 170, Issue 3, September 2025, Pages 1233-1242.](https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ijgo.70122)

	of menstrual bleeding.
19.	Consuming dairy products such as cheese and yogurt causes delays or stops menstruation.
20.	Consuming hot foods/drinks reduces/stops menstrual bleeding.
21.	Consuming cold foods/drinks reduces/stops menstrual bleeding.
22.	Even if a tampon or menstrual cup is used during menstruation, swimming in the sea is not allowed.
23.	Exercising (walking, pilates, fitness, etc.) during menstruation increases menstrual pain.
24.	Topics related to menstruation should not be discussed in public settings where everyone can hear.
25.	Hygienic products (pads, tampons, etc.) should be concealed to prevent others from seeing them.
26.	Women cannot enter places such as mosques, shrines, temples, etc. during menstruation.
27.	Women should sleep in separate rooms from their spouses during the menstrual period.
28.	Women should sleep in separate beds from their spouses during the menstrual period.
29.	Menstrual pain decreases after giving birth.
30.	Menstrual pain decreases after the first sexual intercourse.
31.	Menstrual bleeding should last exactly one week.
32.	Women are considered unclean during their menstrual periods.
33.	Menstrual blood is considered unclean.

Table 2.

Based on the myths or widespread misconceptions regarding menstruation, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 above, educational institutions can play an active role in eliminating negative stigma, discriminatory myths against women, and issues related to women's reproductive lives. In the formulation of Indonesia's SDGs Roadmap, which serves as the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), this issue is particularly relevant to Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 5 (gender equality), and Goal 6 (clean water and proper sanitation). Moreover, the government is also focusing on goals and targets that are most relevant to Indonesia's development challenges, where key issues in this roadmap converge on sectors such as health, education, social protection, and basic infrastructure, including water and sanitation.¹⁰

In line with this, Muhammadiyah–'Aisyiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTMA) have the potential to contribute to the eradication of discrimination and violence against women, starting from the immediate environment around the campus or the students' place of residence. As one of the PTMAs, the Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Technology and Business (ITB-AD) Jakarta holds the vision of "becoming an excellent and competitive higher education institution in the field of technology and business, based on the values of Progressive Islam with international reputation" (Vision and Mission ITB-AD, 2017). Hamim Ilyas further states that the Islam conveyed by Muhammadiyah is oriented toward *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which translates to spreading happiness and goodness to all

¹⁰ Peta Jalan SDGs Indonesia.

https://lmsspada.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/pluginfile.php/765421/mod_resource/content/1/Roadmap_Bahasa-Indonesia_File-Upload.pdf

humans, not only Muslims but all people.¹¹ Islam rahmatan lil ‘alamin is intended for the development of a humane civilization. Moreover, KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah as a movement of Islam that embodies rahmatan lil ‘alamin.¹² Currently, rahmatan lil ‘alamin has been transformed into Progressive Islam; according to Biyanto (2022), this is implemented through five values: (1) pure monotheism (*tauhid*), (2) a deep understanding of the Qur’an and Sunnah, (3) institutionalizing functional and solution-oriented righteous deeds (*amal shalih*), (4) future-oriented thinking, and (5) practicing tolerance, moderation, and collaboration.

Therefore, one of the Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) curricula at ITB-AD Jakarta as a PTMA focuses on discussing issues of cleanliness and reproductive health in relation to an Islamic perspective, namely Praktikum Ibadah. As a compulsory course or General Basic Course (Mata Kuliah Dasar Umum / MKDU), Praktikum Ibadah is offered in the second semester across all study programs at ITB-AD Jakarta. At ITB-AD, Praktikum Ibadah is very specific and has a distinctive characteristic, namely Ibadah yang Berperspektif Perempuan (IBP).

IBP is a practicum of worship that includes purification (*thaharah*), obligatory prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, umrah, as well as the care of the deceased, which are discussed and practiced through women’s perspectives, experiences, and histories. IBP has become a distinctive feature of learning at the ITB-AD Jakarta campus. It is also possible that it is not taught at other PTMAs. IBP has been a curriculum implemented through AIK at ITB-AD Jakarta since 2017 by the AIK lecturer, Yulianti Muthmainnah. One of the main topics in Praktikum Ibadah examined in this study is fasting (*puasa*). This issue is analyzed from women’s perspectives, particularly whether women who are menstruating are prevented from fasting and carrying out other activities.

This is important to study because discussions of menstruation, as outlined in Table 2, are influenced by strong myths in society that are intertwined with religious perspectives that can be gender-biased, as we often hear, such as:

Menstruation prohibits women from cutting their nails, trimming their hair, or washing their hair. If hair falls out, it must be collected and bathed together during the obligatory bath (<i>mandi wajib</i> or <i>mandi besar</i>) after menstruation has ended or after becoming ritually pure.
Women who are menstruating are prohibited from holding or reading the Qur’an.
Menstruating women are prohibited from entering mosques or mushalla because menstrual blood is considered <i>najis</i> (impure) and is believed to contaminate the mosque or mushalla.
Menstruating women are prohibited from performing prayer, <i>tawaf</i> , <i>i’tikaf</i>

¹¹ Hamim Ilyas. *Fikih Akbar: Prinsip-Prinsip Islam Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin*. Pustaka Alvabet. Jakarta: 64, (2018).

¹² Zakiyudin Baidhaw, Azaki Khoirudin, Mohd Nor, M.R.: “Exploring Muhammadiyah's Historical Civilizational Dimension of Education in Indonesia: Philosophy and Ethos of Humanitarian and Cosmopolitan,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*. 15(1), 183-197, (2020).

(remaining in the mosque for worship), and fasting.
Menstruating women are prohibited from adorning themselves or using fragrances because it is believed to invite Satan.
Women who are menstruating (referred to as <i>cuntaka</i> in Hinduism) are prohibited from preparing religious rituals and from entering sacred religious spaces, such as temples (<i>pura</i>) or Hindu places of worship in Bali. ¹³

Table 3.

As shown in Table 3 above, we are reminded that prohibitions on menstruating women performing religious rituals are influenced by religious perspectives. These perspectives are practiced by women in the form of refraining from or not performing religious rituals, not only among Muslim women but also within Hinduism and other religions. Therefore, the attitudes of women who continue to refrain from religious practices or rituals due to menstruation are important to be appreciated and respected. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, namely Article 29 paragraphs (1) and (2).

For this reason, referring to the 2021 Community Sexual and Reproductive Health (CSRH) Curriculum training module from the College of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (CoSRH), the article on personal beliefs recognizes that within a diverse body of trainees, some may experience a conflict between their personal beliefs and one or more aspects of the CSRH curriculum, in theory and/or in practice.¹⁴ IBP-AIK recognizes that the personal beliefs of individual participants (students at ITB-AD Jakarta) may change during the course of their training or career. It is recommended that participants review their personal beliefs and their impact.

Previous research has examined whether women who are menstruating are permitted to fast or not, accompanied by explanations of the definition of menstruation from an Islamic perspective, including interpretations in tafsir and fiqh. The research respondents were young women aged between 20 and 42 years who were active in Muhammadiyah and women's movements. The first finding showed that women in the KUPI Network who agreed that menstruating women could fast were attacked for their opinions, their expertise was undermined, and they were seen as being more associated with their bodies than men in the KUPI Network. Second, young women who are active in Muhammadiyah but not involved in the women's movement argue that the prohibition of fasting and sexual relations during menstruation is because it is considered "dirty." Third, respondents who are active in Muhammadiyah and the women's movement believe that fasting during menstruation is permissible,

¹³ Amira Ain binti Ag Damit. *Wanita Menstruasi Dalam Pandangan Dan Praktek Agama Islam Dan Hindu (Studi Komparatif Penganut Agama Islam Di Mesjid Pusdai Dan Penganut Agama Hindu di Pura Agung Wira Loka Natha)*.
https://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/7172/2/2_abstrak.pdf

¹⁴ The College of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (CoSRH). *Community Sexual and Reproductive Health (CSRH) Curriculum 2021*. Page.62-63.
<https://www.cosrh.org/Common/Uploaded%20files/documents/csrh-definitive-document-v2.pdf>

depending on the woman's ability, and that menstruation is not something dirty. Fourth, women who are active in the women's movement and KUPI but not involved in Muhammadiyah state that women can fast during menstruation because it is a normal reproductive cycle for women.¹⁵

METHODS

This study examines the paradigms of young people, specifically female students at ITB-AD Jakarta who participated in the IBP-AIK class at ITB-AD Jakarta. In particular, it explores the question of whether women who are menstruating are permitted to perform acts of worship, along with reasons behind their views, after they received explanations about the history of menstruation, the definition of menstruation, Islamic perspectives on menstruation, and the prohibitions for women who are menstruating.

This study employs a qualitative research approach, combining a literature review and analysis of students' final projects. The literature review focuses on the Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) curriculum, which serves as the ideologization of Muhammadiyah, and the practical Ibadah yang Berperspektif Perempuan (IBP), or Worship with a Women's Perspective. IBP was developed by Yulianti Muthmainnah as a lecturer at ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta. IBP was established after the Praktikum Ibadah-AIK curriculum which lacks women's perspectives failed to understand the involvement and experiences of women in the history of Islamic religious rituals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lectures and discussions on the chapter of fasting in the course Ibadah yang Berperspektif Perempuan (IBP) were initially opened with the question, "Are women's experiences and histories acknowledged by Allah Swt?" This was followed by a second question: "Why are discussions about women's bodies often dominated by men rather than women themselves?" In religious contexts, this role is often taken by ustadz or kyai; in health contexts, by male doctors.

To strengthen this second question, examples were introduced and presented to show that discussions about menstruation are often dominated by men, with male-only panels. One example was a flyer discussing "Nanti Kita Cerita tentang Nyeri Haid" (Later We Will Talk about Menstrual Pain), organized by GMITS, Manyar Medical Center, and the Menstrual Pain Clinic on 21 April 2024, which featured four male doctors without a single female doctor or female speaker.¹⁶ As shown in the example below:

¹⁵ Yulianti Muthmainnah. Menstruation and Fasting in Islamic Discourse: A Study of Muhammadiyah Youth and KUPI Interpretations. *Jurnal Millati*. Vol. 9 (2), 2024. <https://ejournal.uinsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/millati/article/view/2280>

¹⁶ Yulianti Muthmainnah. 'Perempuan-perempuan Pejuang, Penakluk Korona'. 2020, dalam *Wajah Kemanusiaan di Tengah Wabah*. David Krisna, dkk (Ed). Yogyakarta: Jaringan Intelektual Berkemajuan. Link <https://jibpost.id/perempuan-pejuang-penakluk-korona/>.



Picture 1.

Additionally, when the issue became widespread on social media and is turned into a trending topic, the male-only panel changed into five speakers, with one female doctor included. As shown in the YouTube display (Picture 2) below.

After the evidence above was presented, it was followed by an open discussion on important facts related to women's issues in worship. This began with definitions, by comparing the meaning of menstruation from the perspectives of medical science and Islam. First, from the scientific or medical perspective, menstruation is a natural physiological process in women that occurs as part of the reproductive cycle. Medically, menstruation is defined as periodic bleeding from the uterus due to the shedding of the endometrial lining (uterine wall) because fertilization does not occur. Thus, menstruation occurs as follows: (a) every month, a woman's body prepares for pregnancy by thickening the uterine lining; (b) if the egg cell is not fertilized by sperm, hormone levels (estrogen and progesterone) decrease; (c) as a result, the uterine lining sheds and exits through the vagina in the form of menstrual blood. The medical characteristics of menstruation include a cyclical occurrence (i.e. on average every 21–35 days), a duration of approximately 3–7 days, its indication that the reproductive system is functioning normally, and the fact that it is not a disease but a natural biological process.

Second, from the Islamic perspective, menstruation is known as *haid*. From the perspective of Islamic law (syariat), *haid* is defined as natural blood that comes out of a woman's uterus at certain times, not due to illness or injury. This definition is explained by ulama fiqh based on the Qur'an and hadith. Discussions of *haid* are found in the word of Allah Swt in QS. al-Baqarah verse 222, which explains that *haid* is a natural condition in women and has specific legal provisions. Islam views *haid* as *fitrah* (a natural disposition) of women, not

something that is morally impure. However, haid is classified as *hadas besar* or big hadas, so some scholars base rules of worship on this classification, namely that menstruating women do not perform prayer and fasting; obligatory fasting (Ramadan) must be made up on other days; and after menstruation ends, women are required to perform the major ritual bath (i.e. a major bath or janabah bath) to resume worship. Furthermore, Islam emphasizes that haid is not viewed as a disgrace, but as a biological condition that is respected and regulated for the benefit of women. Therefore, other activities are permitted by some scholars, as shown in the table below:



Picture 2.¹⁷

Fact
Thaharah or purification in the chapter of fiqh ibadah emphasizes cleanliness and purity; therefore, cutting hair, trimming hair, or washing hair for the purpose of cleanliness is not prohibited, but rather encouraged.
Menstruation does not prevent women from learning religion, including reading or listening to the recitation of the Qur'an.
Even though menstruating women do not perform prayer, other acts of worship can still be carried out, such as dzikir (remembering and mentioning Allah Swt).

Table 4.

The discussion then continued with a comparison of menstruation or haid presented in the form of a table to facilitate understanding.

¹⁷ Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Nyeri Haid, GMITS Zoominar. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOAjbSsqlKY>

Aspect	Science/Medical Perspective	Islamic Perspective
Term	Menstruation	Period (Haid)
Definition	Shedding of the uterine wall due to failure of fertilization.	Natural blood that comes out of a woman's uterus at certain times.
Cause	Hormonal changes (estrogen & progesterone).	Natural provisions (fitrah) determined by Allah SWT.
Character	Normal biological processes.	A natural state that has legal consequences.
Body status	Considered to be medically healthy.	Experiencing major impurity.
Impact in worship	Does not affect worship activities medically.	Not praying, fasting, tawaf, and having sex with your wife.
Cycle	Average of 21–35 days.	There are minimum and maximum limits according to Islamic jurisprudence, which can cause differences in the rules.
After the menstrual period ends	The body returns to its normal phase.	Women are obligated to take a major bath to become pure.
Value assessment	Does not contain moral values	Not a sin or a disgrace.

Table 5.

The discussion then proceeded to debunk myths related to menstruation and to provide explanations or clarifications. First, the myth that menstruation is personally dirty or najis, so that menstruating women must be avoided or even isolated from their families or homes. The fact is that menstrual blood is indeed najis, but menstruating women are not dirty or degraded, and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ continued to interact normally with his wives during menstruation. Second, the myth that menstruating women are not allowed to engage in any activities. In fact, medically, light to moderate activities can actually be helpful, and Islam only restricts certain acts of worship, not social activities. Third, the myth that women should not wash their hair or bathe during menstruation. The fact is that there is no medical or religious prohibition, and bathing actually maintains cleanliness and comfort. Fourth, the myth that drinking ice causes menstrual blood to clot. In fact, there is no scientific evidence linking drinking ice to the clotting of menstrual blood, and the temperature of beverages does not affect the menstrual process. Finally, fifth, the myth that menstruation is always painful. In fact, menstrual pain (dysmenorrhea) varies from person to person and cannot be generalized. Therefore, if the pain is excessive, a medical examination is necessary.

In relation to the aspect that menstruation can involve pain, this issue was then discussed in more detail during the lectures. It referred to QS. al-Baqarah verse 184, which mentions the parties who are permitted not to fast, namely:

فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامٍ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا سَفَرًا أَوْ عَلَى فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا ۖ أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ ﴿١٨٤﴾ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Fasting is for a fixed number of days, and if one of you is sick, or if one of you is on a journey, you will fast the same number of other days later on. For those who are capable of fasting (but still do not fast), there is a redemption: feeding a needy man for each day missed. Whoever voluntarily does more good than is required will find it better for him; ^a and that you should fast is better for you, if you only know. ^b (a) This act of extra merit could either be feeding more than the one person required or both fasting and feeding the poor. (b) Here ends the early injunction with regard to fasting, which was revealed in 2 A.H. prior to the Battle of Badr. The verses that follow were revealed about one year later and are linked with the preceding verses since they deal with the same subject.

Based on the verse above, it is stated that those who are permitted not to fast are those who are in a state of illness or undertaking a long journey. In discussing this issue, in collaboration with the Center for Islamic Studies, Women, and Development (PSIPP) ITB-AD Jakarta and the 'Aisyiyah Community of ITB-AD Jakarta, discussions and training related to the issue of fasting and menstruation were conducted. These activities were carried out three times, namely:



Picture 3.

DISKUSI ONLINE

New Normal; Membentengi Diri Agar Sehat Secara Fisik, Psikis, dan Seksual, serta Terhindar dari Corona

Dr. Alexia Kusuma
(Dokter Umum di Kementerian)
-Kesehatan fisik; meningkatkan imun dan asupan gizi

Dr. Rohimi Zamzami, S.Psi, S.H, M.Pd
(Pakar Pendidikan Karakter, Dosen Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta)
-Kesehatan Psikis; Taati Protokol Kesehatan, Respon Otak dan Tubuh

Dr. Dewi Rumiris, SpOG
(Dokter Spesialis Kandungan Rumah Sakit Muhammadiyah Taman Puring Jakarta)
-Kesehatan reproduksi; kehamilan direncanakan atau tanpa perencanaan dimasa Pandemi

Yulianti Muthmainnah
(Dosen, Ketua Komunitas Aisyiyah ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta)

Rosita Moderator
(Dosen dan Sekretaris Komunitas Aisyiyah ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta)

Via Zoom Meet

Pukul 10.00 WIB
Ahad, 05 Juli 2020

Picture 3 (above) dan Picture 4 (below).

ITB AHMAD DAHLAN
Social Technopreneur University

Kampus Merdeka
INDONESIA JAYA

Muktamar 'Aisyiyah ke-48

Komunitas 'Aisyiyah
ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta

Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan

Dalam rangka songsong
Muktamar 'Aisyiyah ke-48 di Surakarta

**PELATIHAN
KESEHATAN
REPRODUKSI PEREMPUAN**

SABTU, 12 NOVEMBER 2022 | 09.00 - 16.00 WIB
Ruang Syahrir Nurut, Lt. 2, ITB Ahmad Dahlan Jakarta - Kampus Ciputat
(Jl. Ir. H. Juanda No. 77, Cirendeu, Ciputat Timur, Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419)

Nanda Dwinta
Direktur Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan

Ayu Anggaritno Proboningdyah
Bidang & Aktifis Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan

MATERI PELATIHAN

Pengantar : Kontrak Pelatihan
Materi 1 : Kesehatan Reproduksi Perempuan - Sesi 1
(Oleh Dokter dan Bidan Kesehatan Reproduksi Perempuan)
Materi 2 : Kesehatan Reproduksi Perempuan - Sesi 2
Materi 3 : Kesehatan Reproduksi dan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan dan Anak

Fasilitas:
Sertifikat & Ilmu yang bermanfaat

Narahubung:
089637586963 (Dinda)
0895328078198 (Ana)

ITB Ahmad Dahlan itb_ahmaddahlan itbahmaddahlan itb-ad.ac.id

Female students were asked to participate in all three activities. Based on these activities, female students at ITB-AD Jakarta were invited to critically discuss the idea that menstrual blood is not impure. Kyai Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir refers to the opinion of Bayandir, an expert in Islamic studies and former Deputy Mufti of Turkey (1976–1997), who believes that a menstruating woman may fast if she is physically strong. According to him, the existing prohibition against menstruating women fasting stems from fiqh being influenced by the social context of its time, rather than from the Qur'an or Hadith. The Qur'an obliges all adult Muslims to fast during Ramadan, unless they are sick or traveling.¹⁸ Kyai Imam Nakhai' also agrees with Kyai Kodir's view that menstruating women may fast.¹⁹

Furthermore, I argue that my writing draws strength from the experiences of menstruating women and maintains that menstruation should not be viewed as dirty blood that bars women from fasting, but rather as a natural biological process that should not discriminate against women or marginalize them, which is in line with the spirit of Islam.²⁰ The Qur'an views menstruation as a natural biological cycle for women, which can cause pain, weakness, and other forms of discomfort. For women who are menstruating or are experiencing postpartum and are unable to fast due to their vulnerable condition, there is a form of ease or relief in worship (*rukhsah*) available to them, as mentioned in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 184–185. However, for those who feel healthy and strong even during menstruation, they may choose to fast or not, and make up for missed fasts on another day. Those who believe that menstruating women may fast must be consistent in their stance. They should not fast only during Ramadan, but, in accordance with principles of Islamic jurisprudence, maintain consistency and avoid mixing different schools of thought or scholarly opinions. Therefore, beyond Ramadan, voluntary fasting (*puasa sunnah*) may also be practiced even during menstruation.

Ultimately, female students hold different perspectives on fasting and menstruation. Some are active only in Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah or the Muhammadiyah Student Association (*Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah*), while others are active in Islamic organizations and also involved in gender studies and women's movements. Based on the results of all lectures and training activities, the findings show that, first, female students who believe that menstruating women are permitted to fast or engage in other religious activities are considered liberal and are seen as contradicting the word of Allah Swt and the Qur'an. Second, female students who have not been involved in women's movements tend to view the prohibition of fasting and other forms of worship as a rule based on the assumption that menstruation is "dirty." Third, respondents who are active in gender studies and women's

¹⁸ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. (2020). *Bolehkah Perempuan Haid Berpuasa? Polemik Tafsir Ayat 185 dan 222 Surat al-Baqarah*. Mubadalah.id; [5 Mei 2020].

<https://mubadalah.id/bolehkah-perempuan-haid-berpuasa/>

¹⁹ Imam Nakhai. (2020). 3 Alasan Perempuan Haid Boleh Puasa. Mubadalah.id [26 April 2021]. <https://mubadalah.id/3-alasan-perempuan-haid-boleh-berpuasa/>

²⁰ Yulianti Muthmainnah. Mendiskusikan Darah Haid. Media Indonesia [Sabtu, 9 Mei 2020]. <https://mediaindonesia.com/opini/311659/mendiskusikan-darah-haid>

movements believe that fasting during menstruation is permissible depending on the woman's condition, and they reject the notion that menstruation is something dirty.

CONCLUSION

Science and medicine views menstruation as a natural biological process in the female reproductive system, while Islam views menstruation as a natural blood flow, which is part of a woman's natural disposition, but with certain religious consequences. However, both agree that menstruation is not a disease, but rather a normal and natural process.

Based on the results of all lectures and training, the research results show that female students who believe that menstruating women are permitted to fast or engage in other religious activities are considered liberal, thus contradicting the word of Allah SWT and the Quran. Second, female students who have not been involved in women's movements tend to view the prohibition on fasting and other forms of worship as a rule based on the assumption that menstruation is "dirty." Third, respondents who are active in gender studies and women's movements believe that fasting during menstruation is permissible depending on the woman's condition, and reject the notion that menstruation is dirty.

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Family Challenges in Stunting Care: Identifying four main barriers and additional risk factors

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ABSTRACT

Parental stress is related to children's mental health and well-being. The success of stunting care is influenced by the family's acceptance and coping response in caring for stunted children. The inability to accept a diagnosis of stunting in children is often responded to with denial as an emotional coping strategy that has an impact on decreasing childcare patterns. The purpose of this study is to explore the problems faced by parents in caring for children with stunting. The study employed qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and brainstorming sessions. One hundred eight experienced Integrated Service Post (Posyandu) cadres were participants, and data analysis was measured based on credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. The study's results revealed four key indicators of problems: issues related to nutrition management, negative responses to educational and counseling services, negative responses to child growth and development evaluations, and negative responses to integrated health post visits. Additional problems included picky eaters, lack of information or knowledge of stunting care, not visiting integrated health posts, and not accepting or caring about children's growth and development. Readiness to be a parent who can choose coping mechanisms that solve problems can impact the care of stunted children.

KEYWORDS: *denial, negative coping, nutrition, stress, stunting*

INTRODUCTION

Child stunting remains a significant problem in the world, especially in poor and developing countries. The prevalence of stunting in the world in 2017 reached 22.2%, with half of the children with stunting in Asia (55%), and one-third in Africa (39%).

In 2017, the number of stunted toddlers in Indonesia was ranked 4th in the world after Nigeria, Pakistan, and India. Before 2015, there had been a decrease in the number of stunting, namely; 2007 (36%); 2010 (35%); 2013 (37.2%); 2015 (29%) (Kemenkes RI, 2016), However, the decline was still high above the national target at that time, namely 28% (Laporan Nasional Riskesdas, 2018).

According to the 2017 Ministry of Health research, stunting in East Java showed a prevalence of 26.7%. Batu had the second-highest incidence of stunting (35.1%), after Bondowoso (38.3%), while Malang had a lower prevalence, at 27.4% (Riskasdas Jatim, 2018).

Stunting will have short-term and long-term impacts. The short-term impacts include brain development disorders, intellectual disorders, physical growth disorders, and metabolic disorders. The long-term impacts include decreased cognitive function and learning achievement, compromised immunity, an increased risk of disease, and suboptimal work quality. The assessment conducted by the OECD PISA (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Programme for International Student Assessment), a prestigious global organization, which held a competition for 510,000 15-year-old students from 65 countries, including Indonesia (2012), in the fields of reading, mathematics, and science, ranked Indonesia 64th out of 65 countries. Stunting also has an impact on decreasing productivity, inhibiting economic growth, and increasing poverty and inequality (Kementerian Keuangan, 2018). Ultimately, this will have an impact on the nation's future productivity and the quality of its human resources (Kemenkes RI, 2016).

The government has prepared a National Strategy for Accelerating Stunting Handling for 2018-2024. The government aimed to reduce the stunting rate from 27.67 percent in 2019 to 14 percent by 2024, in line with WHO regulations (WHO, 2018). The government intervenes in two categories. The first category is specific nutrition intervention, namely monitoring toddlers at integrated health posts, providing immunizations, providing vitamin A, providing additional food (PMT), and others. The second category is sensitive nutrition intervention, which includes providing drinking water and proper sanitation, post-natal family planning (KB) services, information related to stunting, social food assistance, conditional cash assistance, and other services (KEMEN-PMK, 2018). Specific nutrition interventions are generally carried out in the health sector, but they only contribute 30%, while 70% are attributed to sensitive nutrition interventions (Kemenkes RI, 2016).

The prevalence of stunting in Indonesia decreased from 24.4% to 21.6% in 2022. However, this decrease is still overshadowed by the prevalence of wasting and underweight, which tends to persist and even increase from the previous year (Kemenkes, 2022). Indonesia targeted the prevalence to decrease to 14% by 2024, referring to WHO regulations, but to achieve the target of 14% by 2024, Indonesia needed to work hard because it must achieve a target of decreasing 3.8% per year, while the results of the decrease from 2019 to 2021, were only able to decrease 3.2%, and in 2022, it only decreased by 2.8% (Kemenkes, 2022).

The success of child care for stunted children is influenced by the family's acceptance and coping response in caring for these children. The inability to accept a diagnosis of stunting in children can cause parental stress, which results in a decrease in child care patterns. Parenting stress is conceptualized by Abidin (1992). Stress is caused by characteristics related to both the child and the parent (e.g., parent personality and pathology, attachment patterns, adaptability, child demands, mood, or any current illness), which can cause distress due to perceived parental roles. In addition, parental stress is associated with lower

levels of mental health, psychopathology, and well-being in both parents and children (Barroso et al., 2018; Menon et al., 2020).

Parental stress negatively impacts children and adolescents. Menon et al.'s (2020) findings suggest that potential child neglect and child behavior are related to parental stress. Children's social competence deficits may explain the presence of child neglect and parents who need services to reduce stress (Crum & Moreland, 2017). Stress in parents can reduce the quality of parenting behavior.

A depressed mother may experience fatigue, impaired concentration, and psychomotor retardation, all of which can affect feeding practices and increase psychological stress for the child, affecting growth via the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis extending to risk factors for poor parenting (Shay et al., 2020; Frith et al., 2009) and interfering with children's rights to live in a safe, supportive, and loving family (Black et al., 2020). Susiloretni et al. (2021) stated that mothers who experience distress increase the risk of mild stunting by 33% (HAZ <-1) and moderate by 25% (HAZ <-2), while fathers' distress increases the risk of mild stunting by 37% and moderate by 28%. Distress experienced by both parents increases the risk of moderate stunting by 40%. Mothers', fathers', and parents' distress (mothers' and fathers' distress) influence stunting by 8.6%, 11%, and 19% respectively.

This condition cannot be ignored; however, the root of the problem must be identified, which can serve as the basis for efforts to resolve it. Based on the above phenomenon, this study aims to dig deeper into the issues that arise in families with stunted children, which can interfere with the care and development of stunted children.

METHODS

This research is an exploratory qualitative study, a design that examines a phenomenon based on empirical facts in the field (Nursalam, 2020). This design was chosen to explore more deeply mothers' experiences caring for children with stunting. Due to limited knowledge about the research problem, this research design was needed to help analyze the dimensions of the problem. It was a valuable initial step to investigate the issue, ensuring that subsequent research projects would be on target and help set priorities for future research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013). The data were collected through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and brainstorming.

1. Participant characteristics, sampling procedure, and sample size

The population in this study was all Integrated Service Post (Posyandu) cadres who assisted mothers with stunted children in the Sisir Health Center work area, Batu, East Java. Samples were taken using the total sampling technique of 108 cadres.

2. Measures and covariates

The measuring instrument in this study was a structured questionnaire that contained issues of problems often faced by stunted families who were assisted by cadres. Cadre demographic data complemented the data presentation. After the data were collected, they were processed and analyzed using frequency tabulation (Siregar, 2017).

3. Data analysis

To ensure that data collection and interpretation accurately reflect the phenomena being investigated, data analysis was used to provide scientific rigor in this qualitative research, which was measured based on credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Shenton, 2004). The researchers conducted three things to develop credibility (Shenton, 2004). First, the researchers developed an initial understanding of the culture, values, and situations applicable in the participants' environment and established a relationship of mutual trust by conducting several visits to the integrated health post and interviews with integrated health post cadres and local community leaders to obtain relevant information. Second, the researchers allowed participants to refuse to participate in the study, and respondents to provide data voluntarily. Finally, internal validity was ensured by returning the interview transcripts to participants to verify the accuracy of the research findings. Transferability provides a comprehensive and detailed description, offering a broad framework for comparison with what participants observe in their own situation (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability and dependability ensure the stability and objectivity of research results, where researchers collect data through semi-structured interviews with potential participants designated as data sources, who are asked the same central questions (Shenton, 2004). Next, the researchers conducted an audit trail by documenting the process in detail, including the contextual, methodological, analytical, and personal responses required to achieve the research results (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993, as quoted in Holloway & Wheeler, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research results are presented in three sub-chapters: respondent characteristics, four indicators of the main problems families face in caring for stunted children, and supporting findings on problems in caring for stunted children.

a. Respondent characteristics

1. Characteristics of respondents based on age

A study conducted on 108 respondents in the Sisir sub-district, Batu, on September 20, 2022, revealed the following characteristics of the respondents.

2. **Distribution of respondent characteristics based on age**

Based on the research results, the ages of the respondents are presented in Figure 1.

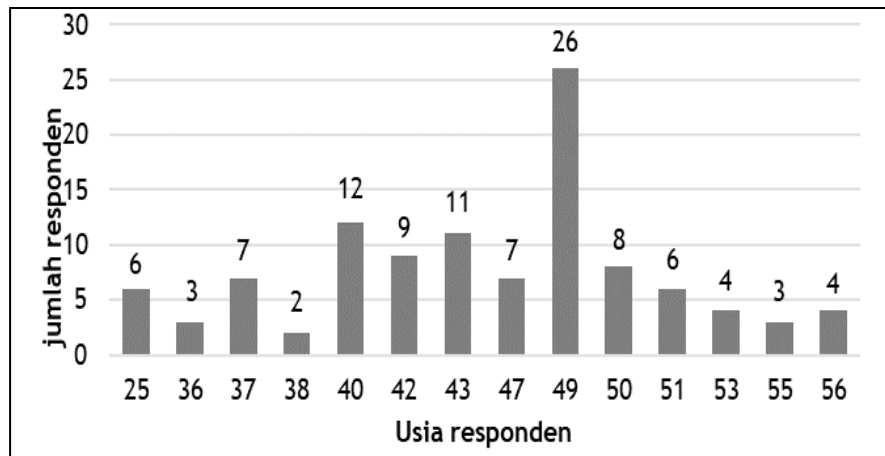


Figure 1. Respondent characteristics diagram based on age
Source: Primary data, 2024

Based on Figure 1, it appears that the most respondents (26) are 49 years old. The second high proportion is that of individuals aged 40 to 43 years old, with 9-12 respondents each. The youngest respondents were 25 years old, and the oldest were 56 years old.

3. **Respondent characteristics based on the distribution of integrated health posts**

The characteristics of respondents based on the distribution of integrated health posts are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Distribution of cadres based on integrated health posts

Based on Figure 2, the respondents were cadres from 13 integrated health posts, with the number of respondents per post ranging from 7 to 9. This indicates that the issues identified by the cadres in their respective health posts were relatively similar in both nature and frequency.

b. Four indicators of main family problems in caring for stunting children

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted by simultaneously forming three groups from the total population as a triangulation effort. The FGD revealed several issues across four main themes: education/counseling problems, nutritional care issues, challenges with integrated health post visits, and concerns regarding growth and development evaluations. These problems are presented descriptively in Figure 3.

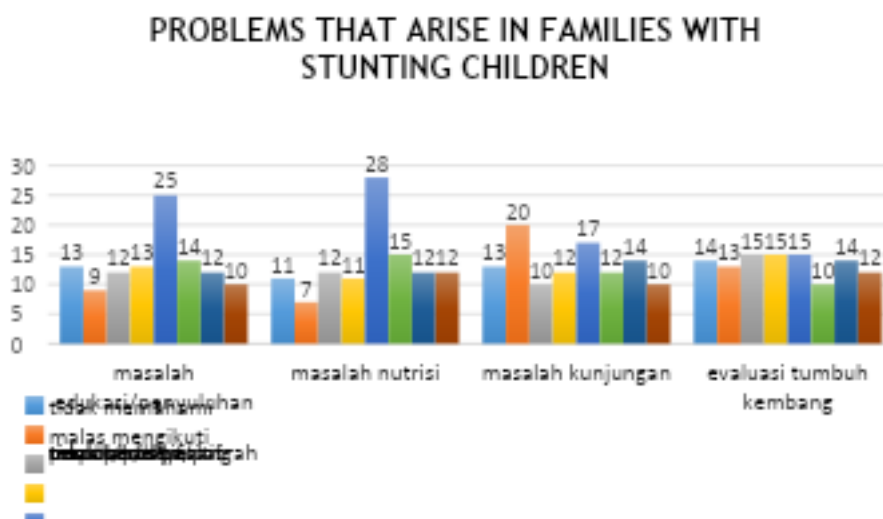


Figure 3. Distribution of family problems with stunted children based on four themes

Figure 3 shows that most families with stunted children tend to reject counseling or educational activities related to stunting (25 respondents) and nutrition problems (28 respondents). Twenty respondents were reluctant to participate in integrated health post activities, and 17 respondents even refused to attend. Furthermore, 15 respondents experienced difficulties in evaluating their children's growth and development, often displaying indifferent, resigned, or avoidant behaviors. Although less frequent, several respondents exhibited anger or aggressive reactions toward health services—14 respondents in response to counseling, 15 regarding nutrition management, 12 toward integrated health post visits, and 10 concerning growth and development evaluations.

Despite these challenges, some respondents (aged 10–14 years, with an average age of 12) demonstrated positive engagement, such as following health instructions, regularly visiting the integrated health post, participating in counseling sessions, improving nutritional practices, and consistently monitoring child growth and development.

c. *Supporting findings of problems in child stunting treatment*

In addition to the four themes above, the results of brainstorming conducted at various times revealed several new findings related to problems in child stunting care, which strengthen the results presented in Figure 3 above, in the form of a word cloud.

1. **Problems of caring for stunted children in parenting patterns, eating behaviors, and nutrition management**

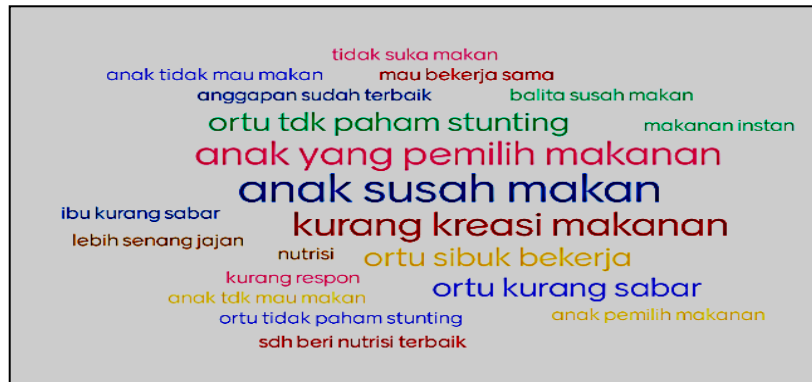


Figure 4. Problems of caring for stunted children in terms of parenting patterns, eating patterns, and nutrition

Figure 4 suggested the problems most often faced by parents are children with difficulty eating, picky eater children, and "lack of food creativity, followed by the statement that parents do not understand stunting care, parents are busy working, and parents are impatient in implementing nutritional parenting patterns.

2. **Problems of parents caring for stunted children in terms of receiving education/counseling**

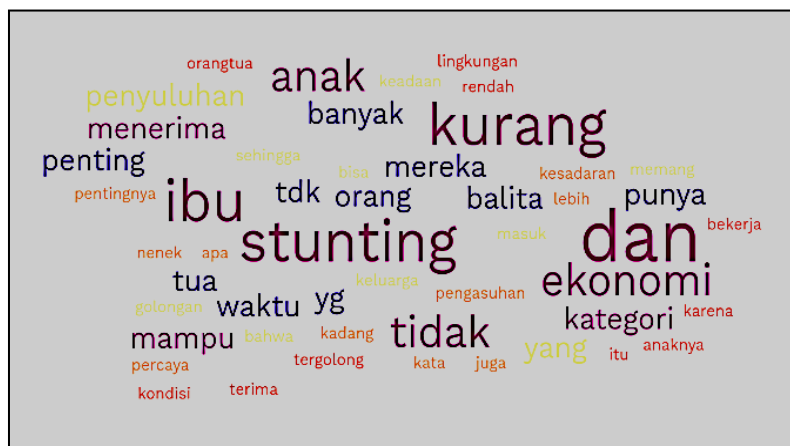


Figure 5. Problems of caring for stunted children in terms of receiving education/counseling

In Figure 7, the most common problems parents face in evaluating child development are also not specific. However, it can still be synthesized that the most frequently occurring words that are meaningful in the word cloud are "No" and "Less", such as not/less accepting, not care, not paying attention, not enthusiastic, not happy, indifferent, sensitive, or denial to the results of the children's growth and development evaluation.

Discussion

a. Respondent characteristics

Based on Figure 1, the age of respondents as volunteers/stunting cadres is mostly 49 years old, followed by 40-43 years old. The age of 40 years is adulthood. Adulthood encompasses a person's attitude, personality, behavior, mindset, intellectual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence (Menon, 1999). This can be seen from one's understanding of how the person loves socializing, understands a person's character and personality, and makes the person likable to others when socializing (Christiana, 2018; Santrock, 2012). Adult stunting health cadres must have high social awareness. Awareness as a social being, where socialization agents are needed in the interaction process to transmit specific values or norms, both directly and indirectly, in efforts to improve health behavior (Karim et al., 2013).

b. Four indicators of main family problems in caring for children with stunting

In assisting families affected by stunting, cadres encountered numerous challenges in addressing the problem. As shown in Figure 3, the most common issue was parents' refusal to participate in counseling or educational activities on stunting and nutrition management. Many parents were reluctant or unwilling to attend integrated health post sessions, often displaying indifference toward their toddlers' growth evaluations or denying that their children were stunted. Expressions of anger were also evident across these issues, reflecting forms of denial and rejection behavior—specifically self-deception—as a means of protecting themselves from perceived or real threats (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Denial, while sometimes regarded as a coping or defense mechanism, is more accurately understood as a self-protective response rather than an adaptive coping strategy.

Freud states that denial is potentially psychologically dangerous because someone who refuses to accept what is happening in reality will cause neglect, so therapy is needed to facilitate acceptance (Foster et al., 2023). This neglect can occur in the care of stunted children, so that the behavior that appears can be resignation, not caring, and even not carrying out the recommendations of health workers by avoiding and denying, as if everything is fine.

One of the most fundamental psychological processes distinguishing denial from efforts to overcome problems is a person's compliance with reality. During the denial process, a person can show an attitude of dispositional pessimism, namely a negative view of oneself, by distancing themselves from activities that are a source of threat (Aldwin, 2007), for example, refusing to come to the

integrated health post, refusing to receive health information, even giving negative feedback to someone, or exhibiting some form of unpleasant information that is directly related to the person's self-concept, such as being angry (Lazarus et al., 1980) or even rejecting reality when receiving information that the child is stunted. Meanwhile, coping strategies focus on solving problems. Optimistic individuals seek help from others and try to examine existing problems. In contrast, their pessimistic counterparts withdraw from the goal of solving the problem and attempt to mitigate negative aspects by denying them (Ritchie, 2014).

Etymologically, denial refers to the refusal to acknowledge or accept certain problems, in which unpleasant information is repressed, dismissed, ignored, or reinterpreted. Alternatively, the information may be consciously recognized but its cognitive, emotional, or moral implications are avoided, neutralized, or rationalized (Cohen, 2001).

On the other hand, neglect means that someone or something is treated carelessly, without proper attention, or with disrespect or indifference (Glasgow, 2009). In the context of (in)justice, neglect does not necessarily mean outright rejection or denial. Rather, neglect implies disinterest, for example, in a situation, environment, or geographic area related to a topic/theme that is considered threatening. Indeed, because it attempts to avoid blame, neglect has a negative moral dimension related to the dereliction of responsibility. This means a failure to extend the duty of care to the problem. This can manifest itself in apathy or, at a societal level, as institutional neglect.

c. Supporting findings of problems in child stunting care

(i) Problems of child stunting care in parenting patterns of eating behavior and nutrition intake

The problems faced by parents that appear most often in the word cloud are children with difficulty eating, picky eaters, and a lack of food creativity among parents who do not understand stunting care. Additionally, parents are busy working and impatient in implementing nutritional parenting patterns. Children who have difficulty eating or are picky eaters are one of the key factors contributing to growth failure. There is a significant influence of picky eating behavior on height, weight, body fat index, or fat mass index; children who are picky eaters are predicted to become thin at some point in their lives (Taylor et al., 2019; Taylor & Emmett, 2019).

The research of Ji et al. (2020) suggests that eating problems can be attributed to several factors, including, in sequence, a lack of attention during eating, irregular eating positions, picky eating habits, excessive meal times, excessive snack intake, and high carbohydrate/sugar content. The mother's education level, family income level, primary caregiver, and family members' attitudes towards children's eating behavior are factors related to eating behavior problems in children. Mothers with high education levels and families with high income levels are protective factors against children's bad eating behavior. The concern of

grandparents, persuading or forcing children to eat, is a risk factor for poor eating behavior in children (Ji et al., 2020). Readiness to become a parent is a sociopsychological phenomenon that encompasses knowledge, emotional evaluation, perception, and individual beliefs about parenting, which are reflected in the components of parenting behavior (Biktagirova & Valeeva, 2015). In other words, readiness to become a parent encompasses the knowledge, emotional evaluation, perception, and individual confidence necessary to respond positively to the presence of a baby when a person assumes the role of a parent. Readiness to become a parent is a free translation of several English terms, including parenting readiness, parental readiness, and readiness for parenthood, among others. Readiness refers to the willingness or openness to participate in a specific process or adopt certain behaviors (Proctor et al., 2018). Other research indicates a negative relationship between avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles on readiness to become parents in early adulthood (Izza & Andromeda, 2019).

(ii) Problems of parents caring for stunted children in terms of receiving education/counseling

The most frequently appearing word that is meaningful in word clouds is "Less", be it less able, less time, less accepting, less awareness, less care, or receiving counseling, which can be caused by economic factors and mothers who have to work so that there is no time to attend counseling. Research indicates a relationship between work, education, and sources of information and the knowledge of mothers of toddlers about stunting (Rahmandiani et al., 2019).

Refusal to attend counseling can be understood as part of the broader process of grief and loss. Coping with stress by ignoring or avoiding problems may serve as a temporary means of emotional relief (Cohen, 2008). Individuals experiencing pressure often struggle to overcome denial, confront reality, and accept the circumstances they face (Cohen, 2001).

(iii) Problems of caring for stunted children in terms of visits to integrated health posts

The most frequently appearing meaningful word in the word cloud is "No," reflected in phrases such as "do not want to take them," "no one to take them," "cannot take them," and "not willing to take them." Other reasons identified include boredom, busyness, forgetfulness, or the child being unwell. Overall, these statements represent various forms of avoidance and may also indicate denial — a refusal to acknowledge that something is wrong with the child — which leads parents to withhold special attention. In this stage of denial, individuals experiencing grief often feel disbelief or reject the reality of the situation that causes their distress. Denial serves as a psychological buffer or coping mechanism, allowing individuals to maintain emotional stability and gradually mobilize less extreme defenses to process their grief at a manageable pace (Kübler-Ross, 2009).

(iv) **Problems of caring for stunted children in evaluating growth and development**

The meaningful words most often occur in the word cloud regarding parents' attitude towards the growth and development evaluation are "No" and "Less," such as not/less accepting, not caring, not paying attention, not enthusiastic, not happy, indifferent, sensitive, or denial of the child's growth and development evaluation.

The attitude and behavior of not caring is part of an effort to cope with a mechanism or self-defense mechanism. Someone under threat or pressure will choose a defense mechanism that is considered to reduce the stress response (Foster et al., 2023). Coping mechanisms in the form of avoidance are coping mechanisms that focus on emotions by processing grief as if there were no problems. Coping strategies that focus on emotions like this can only provide temporary solutions, but they help prepare oneself for change. It is essential to develop healthy emotion-focused coping strategies, enabling individuals to promptly address problems (Nur et al., 2018; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

CONCLUSION

Problems in caring for stunted children mainly refer to four indicators, with the first indicator on the issue of ignorance, unwillingness, and inability to fulfill the nutrition of stunting children, the next is rejection of counseling or education about stunting and nutrition management, rejection and avoidance of visits to the integrated health post, and indifference to the evaluation of the child growth and development. This behavioral indicator is supported by other behaviors, namely anger towards or attack on visits or invitations from cadres to pay attention to children with stunting. A family's response to stunting is often caused by an attitude of denial, which is a stress response that can also serve as a coping strategy or self-defense mechanism to deal with threatening situations. Someone with a coping strategy that focuses on emotions will be pessimistic, withdraw from the goal of solving the problem, and try to fix negative things by denying them. The underlying problem of denial can also be caused by a lack of preparedness to become a parent, resulting in neglect, injustice, and a lack of responsibility, so that attention to nutrition, growth, development, and the continuity of child growth is not the primary focus of parental attention.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Funding Statement

This research is fully funded by the faculty, and there are no other sponsors or grants from the government. The research obtained a research location permit from partners in the Sisir sub-district, Batu, East Java. The ethical feasibility test was conducted at the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, under the Ethics Decree number. E.5.a / 087 / KEPK-UMM / IV / 2024.

Conflict of Interest Statement

This research has no conflict of interest with any party, and no ethical issues were violated. In fact, the research officially received a research permit from the relevant party, number 070/113/422.105/SKP/2024.

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Feminization of Poverty: A critical study on the powerlessness of women informal parking attendants in surabaya

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty through a case study of women informal parking attendants in Surabaya. In the context of urbanization and economic inequality, poor women are increasingly pushed into vulnerable and unprotected sectors of informal labor. The aim of this research is to reveal the socio-economic realities, survival strategies, and structures of power relations faced by these women. Employing a qualitative approach, the study utilized a case study and in-depth interviews with seven primary informants. The findings revealed that these women worked under legally uncertain conditions, shouldered the dual burden of public and domestic labor, and operated within an informal work structure dominated by patron-client relations and symbolic control. Nevertheless, the women also demonstrated agency through spatial negotiations, community solidarity, and survival strategies. The study concludes that the feminization of poverty in urban spaces is not only economic in nature, but also political and cultural. These findings highlight the urgent need for inclusive and gender-sensitive urban policies to promote social sustainability for marginalized women in urban settings.

KEYWORDS: *feminization of poverty; women; informal parking attendants; gender injustice*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of the feminization of poverty has become a central topic in gender and global development studies since the late 20th century. The term was first introduced by Pearce (1978) to describe the growing proportion of women among the world's poor. This condition is reinforced by the fact that women face greater structural barriers in accessing education, decent work, and social protection (Chant, 2003; Moghadam, 2005).

In an increasingly flexible global economy, Standing (1999) highlights how women are disproportionately absorbed into informal sectors characterized by

low wages and a lack of labor protections. In developing countries, including Indonesia, the informal sector employs the majority of female workers (Chen, 2001; ILO, 2018), exacerbating gender inequality and deepening the feminization of poverty (Elson, 1999; Razavi, 2011).

Indonesia, a developing country, is home to Surabaya—its second-largest metropolitan city—which illustrates the dynamics of social inequality driven by rapid urbanization (Widayati, 2022; Nugroho, 2020). Informal occupations such as street parking attendants have become increasingly common, especially among women who have limited access to formal employment (Hartini, 2022; Damayanti, 2023). This practice serves as a manifestation of the feminization of poverty in an urban context.

Previous studies have revealed how women in the informal sector are vulnerable to discrimination, violence, income insecurity, and lack of access to social protection programs (UN Women, 2020; Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Sen, 1999). However, there is a notable gap in research specifically focusing on women working as informal parking attendants within the urban context of Indonesia, particularly in Surabaya. This underexplored phenomenon presents a critical area of study.

Most existing studies on informal parking work concentrate on issues of criminality and urban governance (Sutopo, 2020), while few have investigated how women engage in this sector and experience multiple vulnerabilities due to economic disempowerment and gender inequality (Kabeer, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Sutopo's (2020) approach, for instance, largely emphasizes macro-level legal frameworks, lacking a gender-sensitive analytical lens.

International literature strongly associates the feminization of poverty with inadequate social protection, job segregation, and the double burden of labor (Chant, 2006; Razavi, 2011; Moghadam, 2005). In the national context, research has predominantly focused on domestic workers (Utami, 2019) and factory laborers (Marwati, 2021), while women in semi-informal sectors, such as informal parking, remain underrepresented.

This study offers a new contribution by examining how female informal parking attendants in Surabaya construct survival strategies within a precarious urban socio-economic structure. It combines a feminist approach with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital and Foucault's (1980) theory of power relations, providing a comprehensive framework to understand how power operates within informal social structures. These theoretical perspectives enable a deeper exploration of how structural and symbolic disempowerment is constructed in women's informal labor.

Based on this framework, the study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) What are the socio-economic conditions of female informal parking attendants in Surabaya? (2) What forms of disempowerment do they experience in the context of informal labor? and (3) How does the feminization of poverty manifest in their daily lives?

By centering the experiences of female informal parking workers, this study positions them as critical subjects for understanding the dynamics of the feminization of poverty in Indonesia's urban informal economy. It is hoped that

the research will provide both empirical and theoretical insights into the structural mechanisms that reinforce the disempowerment of poor urban women. Furthermore, it aims to inform gender-sensitive urban development policies through policy briefs targeted at government stakeholders.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and feminist methodology. This approach was chosen as it was well-suited for exploring women's subjective experiences within the context of structural inequality and power relations (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Harding, 1987). A qualitative design also allows for in-depth narrative exploration of how women construct survival strategies amid economic uncertainty (Creswell, 2013).

The research was conducted across several informal parking locations in Surabaya, including the Blauran Market area, Jembatan Merah, and the vicinity of Jalan Tunjungan. The research subjects were female informal parking attendants selected through purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) identifying as female; (2) having worked in informal parking for at least one year; and (3) willing to participate in in-depth interviews. In total, seven key informants were identified, all of whom came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and had worked in the informal parking sector for at least two years. This ensured that participants represented a vulnerable category of informal workers.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing for a flexible exploration of informants' lived experiences. This technique is considered appropriate for understanding how subjects construct meaning around poverty and powerlessness (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, participant observation was conducted, whereby the researcher was present at parking sites for several days to observe firsthand the social interactions and work practices of the women in the field (Spradley, 1980). This observation enriched contextual understanding and strengthened data validity. The final technique used was document analysis. Secondary data were collected from local media reports, municipal regulations, and government documents related to parking management in Surabaya and informal sector empowerment policies.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis with an interpretivist orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical process involved the following steps: (1) data transcription; (2) initial coding; (3) theme categorization; and (4) interpretation through the theoretical lenses of the feminization of poverty, power relations (Foucault, 1980), and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Data validity was ensured through source and methodological triangulation (Patton, 1999).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Informant Socioeconomic Profile

This study involved seven female informants who worked as illegal parking attendants in Surabaya. The seven informants came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds but had a common thread: they were in a position of economic powerlessness that forced them to choose work in the informal sector with all its limitations and uncertainties. This phenomenon shows a real manifestation of what is called the feminization of poverty, namely a condition in which women are more vulnerable to falling into structural poverty due to minimal access to decent work, education, and social protection (Moghadam, 2005).

Mrs. Sumiati (40 years old), an elementary school graduate, lives with her husband and three children. Previously, she worked as a household assistant, but lost her job two years ago. Due to the difficulty of finding a new job, she finally accepted an offer to become an illegal parking attendant. She said:

"I have applied everywhere and looked for work, it is very difficult to get. Finally I was offered to be a parking attendant, but not officially."

Her husband worked odd jobs, and her eldest child, who is still in school, is also forced to work as a dishwasher in a restaurant. In such conditions, Sumiati must manage an uncertain daily income to cover the costs of rent, electricity, water, and her children's school needs. Her dual role as breadwinner and household manager reflects the typical double burden of women in a patriarchal society.

Mrs. Muslikah (37 years old), a migrant from Sampang, Madura, dropped out of elementary school in the 5th due to her family's economic limitations. She has been married since she was a teenager and is a single mother after her husband died.

With a daily income of around IDR 75,000 to IDR 100,000, she is able to rent a boarding house with her children and meet basic needs. Muslikah decided not to remarry, because for her being a single head of the family is more stable psychologically and economically. This decision illustrates the brave survival strategy of poor women in an unfair social structure.

Mrs. Faizah (50 years old), originally from Nganjuk, used to work in a factory before being laid off. She then works as a parking attendant in the Blauran Market area and expresses her gratitude despite her initial awkwardness. She works from the afternoon to evening, earning an income of between IDR 50,000 and IDR 80,000. In her family, she is the economic backbone because her husband, who only works as a pedicab driver, does not have a fixed income. She even still put aside money to give her grandchildren pocket money, a form of intergenerational solidarity that shows how women often become the economic "support" of the extended family.

Ms. Dewi Aisyah (24 years old), a single woman, a vocational high school graduate, and the backbone for her elderly and sickly parents. She previously

worked as a shopkeeper at Pasar Atom but switched to being a parking attendant due to the higher income.

"On weekdays it can be IDR 80,000, on Sundays it can be IDR 120,000."

Her income is used up for household needs and her parents' medical expenses. Although she is still young, Dewi bears a heavy burden as the main breadwinner. This kind of burden is common among young women from urban poor backgrounds who face an economic system lacking adequate social security.

Mrs. Nurjannah (35 years old), an elementary school graduate from Bangkalan, initially worked as a waitress at a food stall but switched to being a parking attendant due to the better income. With an income of around IDR 70,000 to IDR 120,000 per day, she can cover her children's school needs and other basic needs. Her husband, who also works odd jobs, eventually becomes a parking attendant. Nurjannah portrays the collective effort of poor families, where husbands and wives share the burden to survive amidst limitations.

Mrs. Halimah (30 years old), previously a housewife, was forced to work after her husband was laid off. She works from noon until dusk as a parking attendant, while still taking care of her child who is still in kindergarten. Unfortunately, the interview data do not provide detailed information on her income and spending patterns are not well described. However, Halimah still demonstrates the character of a resilient woman in facing the household economic crisis.

Mrs. Ika Marwati (48 years old), from Probolinggo, previously worked in a home industry before finally becoming a parking attendant around Tugu Pahlawan (Heroes Monument).

"Because I don't have a diploma and I'm old, it's hard to find work. Finally, I join a parking coworker."

With an income of between Rp 50,000 and Rp 100,000 per day, she supports her family's economic well-being and remains actively involved in social activities in her village, such as social gatherings. Her activeness shows how poor women not only play a role in the household and work, but also maintain social relations in the community as a form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Overall, the seven informants present a portrait of structural inequality experienced by poor urban women. They face obstacles in education, limited access to formal employment, and no social security, but still carry out domestic and public functions simultaneously. Women in this position experience a very visible feminization of poverty, as stated by Chant (2003), that women's poverty is not only economic, but also cultural and symbolic.

The Reality of Women's Work in the Illegal Parking Sector

In an increasingly segmented and layered urban economic system, women who work as illegal parking attendants occupy marginal, informal, and

unsecured work positions. This reality reflects the strengthening of the informal economic sector as a "flight" space for poor urban women. They not only fill job vacancies that are not provided by the state or the formal labor market, but also become part of a work system that is managed in a semi-feudal manner through the structure of "bosses", "landowners", and "backers".

Work Patterns and Rhythms

The majority of female parking attendants who participated as informants in this study work with a daily work pattern, including weekends and public holidays, without fixed holidays. They usually work in two shifts: morning to afternoon, or afternoon to evening. The difference in these shifts depends on the work location and the volume of vehicles in the area. As told by Mrs. Nurjannah:

"Surabaya is crowded with illegal parking on Saturdays and Sundays...it is busiest on Sundays because there is a car-free day event and there is a cheap second-hand goods market around the East Java Governor's office in the Tugu Pahlawan area...visitors who overflow with motorized vehicles become a delicious breakfast for parking attendants..." (Interview with Nurjannah, March 2025)

This phenomenon suggests that holidays are actually "harvest days" for parking attendants. This also shows that women workers in the informal sector work in a flexible and exploitative capitalist work logic—they do not know rest time and are vulnerable to overwork without compensation or legal protection (Standing, 2011).

The absence of supervision from official parties, such as the Transportation Agency, on busy days highlights the state's neglect of parking lot regulations, which are actually controlled by private parties or informal actors referred to by informants as "boss" or "backing". This was emphasized by Mrs. Ika:

"From the City Transportation Agency which officially manages parking, no one comes to supervise on weekends... because parking lots in busy areas of Surabaya have been bought by boza or backers and in collaboration with the City Government..." (Interview with Ika, May 24, 2025)

The irregular work rhythm, depending on the volume of vehicles, and the absence of formal institutions make women illegal parking attendants work in a very fluid but oppressive work system.

Parking Social Structure: Bosses, Backers, and Invisible Power

These female parking attendants are not independent workers, but are in a subordinate work relationship with the parking lot owner, who is referred to as "boss" or "abah". They make daily deposits from parking fees collected directly from road users. In this system, workers receive a portion of their wages that is determined by the manager, without clear contracts, social security, or complaint mechanisms. As explained by Mrs. Faizah:

"I work, it is halal because I sweat... there is a boz who pays me... for example, if I get IDR 300,000 a day, I get IDR 100,000 in wages... later I will pay it to the boz..." (Interview with Faizah, May 16, 2025)

This system reflects a patron-client-based work relationship that contains power inequality. Women have no control over the results of their work, and their position is highly dependent on the "protection" of informal superiors. This is in line with Lindell's (2010) findings that the informal sector in Global South cities is often not a space free from regulation, but rather is regulated by institutionalized informal power—whether from thuggery, mass organizations, or shadow bureaucrats.

Income Uncertainty and Field Challenges

Working as an illegal parking attendant is characterized by high vulnerability, including irregular income, no insurance, no paid leave, and dependence on weather and traffic conditions. Muslikah, one of the informants, explained that if she did not show up for work, she would not get anything:

"If I don't work, I don't get any money. But I'm grateful, because I have a boss who gives me work." (Interview with Muslikah, April 2025)

In addition to economic uncertainty, these women also face the risk of verbal and sexual violence from parking service users. Young women like Dewi Aisyah said that sexual teasing and jokes were commonplace:

"If I get teased, that's normal, just don't touch me. I'm used to it because I'm on the road every day." (Interview with Dewi, May 2025)

The weather is also a physical challenge. They work in hot sun, rain, and pollution without adequate protection. All informants complained of dull skin and respiratory problems due to vehicle pollution. This situation shows how women's work in this sector is not only economically vulnerable but also threatens physical and mental health.

No less important is the issue of gender-based wage inequality. Women admit that male parking attendants get a higher share of the results because they are considered stronger in arranging vehicles. This discrimination reflects the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in informal work, where masculinity is considered more productive than the work done by women (Elson, 1999).

Some informants admitted that they had never been evicted by the authorities, because they were protected by "boss" or because they knew when to avoid patrols. However, there were also experiences like Halimah's, who was approached by someone claiming to be a government deposit collector:

"There was a man asking for money, he said it was for a deposit to the government. But I knew he wasn't my boss... I was scared at that time too." (Interview with Halimah, May 2025)

This condition shows that the security for women in illegal parking is superficial: as long as they are in an informal protection network, they feel safe,

but once the informal structure is absent, they are very vulnerable to violence, extortion, and eviction. This confirms their position as a working group that is not only unrecognized by the state but also unprotected by the formal legal system.

Survival Strategies in Uncertainty

Women illegal parking attendants in Surabaya not only face severe economic and social challenges, but also have to continuously develop survival strategies. When the state is absent and the formal job market is completely closed to poor women, the informal space becomes a field of struggle that requires not only energy but also ingenuity and social solidarity. In this condition, various adaptive strategies employed by women parking attendants have emerged, ranging from informal loans, utilizing social networks, to adapting to social stigma.

One of the main strategies in dealing with income uncertainty is borrowing from one's closest social network. Mrs. Sumiati said:

"Usually I borrow from my neighbors if it's urgent. If I can't get it, then I go to my relatives... there was also a time when it was too tight, I borrowed from a loan shark... but I don't dare anymore because they are mean when they ask for money..." (Interview with Sumiati, May 2025)

The choice to borrow money from loan sharks shows how poor women are often pushed into exploitative financial channels because they don't have access to formal financial institutions. This was also agreed by Mrs. Faizah, who had tried online loans (*pinjol*):

"I once borrowed online, but my neighbor helped me because I couldn't use a cellphone. The important thing was that I could get money, to buy medicine for my grandchildren at that time." (Interview with Faizah, May 2025)

They also take advantage of informal financial schemes, such as *arisan* or savings and loans in religious study groups, which provide interest-free loans. This is where the importance of women's communities as an economic and social safety net is evident.

This strategy demonstrates how poor women rely on community solidarity as an alternative to the state's absence in providing social protection. This concept is known in feminist theory as the "community-based care economy", where women support each other in informal systems to fill the gaps of the state (Tronto, 1993; Federici, 2012).

Social Network and Family Support

The family is also an important foundation in supporting the lives of women parking attendants. Although the husbands of several informants work odd jobs or even are not employed, the presence of the family is still considered important emotionally and socially. Ibu Nurjannah, for example, said that her husband eventually followed her into becoming a parking attendant:

“Because I worked as a parking attendant and the income was better, my husband eventually joined. So we both work, but I still cook and take care of the house too.” (Interview with Nurjannah, April 2025)

Dewi Aisyah, although still single, works full-time to care for her parents:

“All my income is for my parents’ needs. They are old and sick. I have to be strong, even though I am tired.” (Interview with Dewi, May 2025)

In these cases, women’s work not only supports themselves, but also others. The economic and care contributions made by women are central to the family’s survival. However, this work is often not formally or symbolically recognized in the social and economic systems.

Adaptation to Social Pressure and Stigmatization

Working as an illegal parking attendant, especially for women, is often looked down upon in society. They are considered to violate gender norms that place women in the domestic sphere, and their work is associated with “street life”, which is closely associated with violence and crime.

However, informants demonstrated adaptive strategies in dealing with this stigma. Mrs. Dewi expressed her indifference to the taunts:

“If someone talks, I just keep quiet. The important thing is that I do halal work. I don’t beg them.” (Interview with Dewi, May 2025)

In contrast, Faizah chose an integrative approach:

“I still join in the women’s activities. If there is a social gathering or community service, I come. So they know that I am also active in the village.” (Interview with Faizah, May 2025)

This adaptation reflects women’s ability to negotiate their social identity amidst pressure. They are not passive in accepting stigmatization, but actively rebuild their self-image and social relations within the community. This demonstrates what Butler (1990) calls “agency in vulnerability”—the power of women to act, even when in a vulnerable and marginalized position.

The survival strategies carried out by women illegal parking workers are not merely a response to poverty, but also a form of symbolic resistance to oppressive socio-economic structures. They refuse to be paralyzed by circumstances, instead manifesting empowerment through work, solidarity, and cultural resistance.

They do not engage on open protests or social movements, but their actions to continue working, reject dependency, and build informal networks within an informal work system are forms of grassroots feminist praxis. In this context, they are not only victims of the feminization of poverty but also social subjects who continuously strive for a more humane living space.

Discussion

Structural and Symbolic Powerlessness

The findings of this study demonstrate that women's work in the illegal parking sector in Surabaya cannot be separated from the structural and symbolic configurations of power. Women's bodies and work experience social, material, and discursive control. In Michel Foucault's view, power is not merely repressive, but productive—it regulates how the body is used, regulated, and positioned in social space. These female parking attendants are part of a network of power that shapes them as productive subjects, yet simultaneously subordinates them (Foucault, 1979).

Their bodies are mobilized in hard work on the streets, without legal protection or health insurance. Not only that, their bodies also become objects of public gaze, sexual jokes, and symbols of "inappropriate" work for women. This shows the existence of disciplinary power that regulates what women's bodies can and cannot do in informal workspaces.

Meanwhile, from Bourdieu's (1986) perspective, this condition of powerlessness can be explained through the concept of habitus and the lack of access to various forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. These women lack economic capital (education, savings, and assets), have minimal social capital (elite networks or institutional support), and experience a symbolic deficit because their work is not socially recognized. As a result, they are trapped in an informal work cycle that does not allow for vertical mobility. As Bourdieu (1986) argues, social class is not only reproduced through formal institutions, but also through dispositions embedded in everyday life, including passive acceptance of inferior positions. These women mostly do not question the oppressive work system, because it has been internalized in the habitus that "the important thing is to be able to eat today".

Power Relations in the Informal Work System

The illegal parking work structure reveals a unique power relation between the "boss", market managers, officials, and female workers. Power is not exercised openly, but through informal mechanisms such as daily deposits, verbal permits, and protection from "backers". In this system, female parking attendants do not have control over their workspace and depend on personal relations with the power holders.

As shown in the interview results, there is no legal clarity in this work system. Women do not know how the profit sharing is allocated between managers and the city government, and they have no bargaining position. This shows a form of hidden domination that Gramsci (1971) calls hegemony—where subordination is accepted voluntarily because it is considered "natural".

However, these women are not completely passive. They negotiate, form informal networks, and in some cases, demonstrate agency to maintain their jobs and protect their families. This indicates that power relations in the informal sector are dynamic, not absolute, and always contain spaces for resistance.

Feminization of Poverty in the Urban Context of Surabaya

The phenomenon demonstrated by female illegal parking attendants in Surabaya is a concrete manifestation of the feminization of poverty in urban space. The term feminization of poverty refers to the increasing proportion of women in the world's poor population, which reflects not only income inequality, but also structural exclusion and disempowerment (Chant, 2003; Moghadam, 2005). In Surabaya, the feminization of poverty is seen in the form of women's informal work with minimal protection, low wages, no legal recognition, and still burdened with domestic work.

The informants in this study—whether widows, heads of families, or wives of casual workers—bear the main economic burden within their families. This condition shows that women are not only "forced" to work, but are also "needed" by the family's economic structure to survive. However, this contribution does not change their subordinate position in the public or domestic spheres. This shows that the feminization of work does not automatically lead to women's empowerment, but rather often deepens inequality.

Intersection of Gender, Class, and Inequality in Urban Space

The inequality experienced by female illegal parking attendants is not singular, but rather the result of the intersection of gender, class, and inequality in urban space. The intersectionality perspective emphasizes that social vulnerability arises from the intersection of various systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). In this case, poor women who come from low-education backgrounds, migrate from other regions, and do not have access to elite social networks, experience double exclusion in urban space.

Surabaya, as a modern urban space, displays ambivalence: on the one hand, it prioritizes modernization and orderly urban governance, but on the other hand, it still provides a gray area where the informal economy thrives. In this context, female parking attendants fill spaces that are not officially regulated, and their presence is accepted as long as they do not disrupt the city's aesthetics. In other words, they are allowed to exist only as long as they do not demand rights.

As Mrs. Ika said, they were "never evicted as long as they paid the boss" and did not cause problems with the authorities. This suggests that the presence of poor women in urban spaces is conditional and dependent on informal tolerance that is often transactional.

Uncertain working conditions, without social security, and full of risks have a direct impact on the quality of life of women and their children. The double burden they experience—public work on the streets and domestic work at home—accumulates into physical exhaustion, mental stress, and the potential for long-term health problems. None of the informants in this study had access to BPJS Employment, job training, or skills improvement programs.

In addition, the children of these women parking workers are also at risk of experiencing a recurring cycle of poverty. They grow up in an unstable work

environment, with limited education, and a survival mindset that normalizes informal work from an early age. As exemplified in Mrs. Sumiati's narrative, her child, who is still in school, works as a dishwashing laborer. This shows how the feminization of poverty does not stop at one generation, but becomes a social legacy that is reproduced through unchanging structural conditions.

This study confirms that the city is not a neutral space for all its citizens. Access to decent work, safe spaces, and vertical mobility is largely determined by social class and gender. Poor urban women face not only economic barriers, but also symbolic and cultural barriers that keep them on the fringes of the system.

Inequality of Access to Formal Programs

Although the Surabaya Government has various programs for women's empowerment and poverty reduction, such as MSME training, social assistance, and job placement, field findings show that none of the informants have access to these programs. Some of the main causes are:

- a. Lack of information – Informants do not know about the program or how to register.
- b. Administrative limitations – They do not have a Surabaya ID card or supporting documents.
- c. Stigma and symbolic exclusion – They feel unworthy or undeserving of assistance.

This illustrates what is known as exclusion by design, specifically, social programs that indirectly exclude the most vulnerable groups through technocratic mechanisms and non-inclusive administrative criteria. In the case of illegal female parking attendants, they are not only unreachable by the state but are systematically left behind.

Contribution to Understanding the Feminization of Poverty in the Informal Urban Economy

This study contributes to the literature on the feminization of poverty by highlighting how poor urban women occupy informal work spaces under conditions of uncertainty and lack of recognition. Although the term feminization of poverty is often used generically, this study shows that women's experiences of poverty are contextual, situated at the intersection of urban policies, informal economic structures, and social inequality.

The work of illegal parking attendants carried out by women is not simply an economic activity, but also a form of intervention against family crises, state neglect, and social exclusion. In this context, these women are not only victims of structures but also actors who respond adaptively. They build informal networks, strengthen community solidarity, and form creative survival practices—even within a highly exploitative system.

The concept of the feminization of poverty, previously understood narrowly—simply as an increase in the number of women in the poor population—needs to be developed into an analytical framework that captures the intersectional complexity of how class, gender, migrant status, and family status intertwine to determine one's position in the socioeconomic structure.

This finding aligns with studies conducted by Saptari (2001) and Ford (2004) on women's work in the informal sector in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, which demonstrate that women informal workers often experience invisibility in public policies and lack work protection. However, what distinguishes this current study is its focus on women's work in the context of illegal parking—a sector that has so far been rarely studied and tends to be considered masculine.

Unlike women domestic workers or street vendors who have received a lot of attention from activists and academics, women parking attendants are in a sector that is almost untouched. In many studies, parking work is associated with male thuggery. Therefore, the presence of women in this space broadens our understanding of the forms of feminization of work in complex and masculine urban structures.

This study also highlights the importance of reading women's work not only from an economic aspect, but also from a political and cultural one. Their presence in the city's public space presents an implicit claim to the right to space and social recognition—although it is often not directly stated.

Ethical Reflection on the Research

This research has several limitations that need to be noted. First, the number of informants is limited to seven people and does not include variations in age between young and old or migrant workers from outside Java. Second, due to the sensitivity of the topic of illegal work and relations with informal officials/managers, there are limitations in exploring structural information in more depth, such as the flow of deposits, the amount of levies, and relations with parking mafias.

Third, due to the ethnographic and participatory nature of the fieldwork, there is a possibility of bias in the interaction between researchers and informants—especially when researchers are considered "outsiders" or part of official institutions. Therefore, it is important to critically reflect on the researcher's position in the fieldwork, and to maintain ethical principles, such as confidentiality, security, and comfort of informants.

Ethically, the researcher realizes that the narrative constructed in this study should not reinforce stereotypes or stigmatization of poor urban women. On the contrary, this research aims to provide a voice for women who have so far been unheard, so that they can be recognized as important actors in the dynamics of the urban economy—even in the most vulnerable conditions.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that women's work as illegal parking attendants in Surabaya is a manifestation of the feminization of poverty in an unequal urban economic space. These women face complex social realities—minimal formal education, limited access to formal employment, income uncertainty, and the double burden of being breadwinners and housekeepers. In an informal work structure dominated by unofficial power relations such as "boss" and "backers", women's bodies and labor are mobilized without legal protection, social security, or symbolic recognition. Nevertheless, they continue to develop survival strategies through social networks, informal loans, and community solidarity that demonstrate their agentic capacity in conditions of great limitations.

Theoretically, this study emphasizes that the feminization of poverty cannot be read purely economically, but must be analyzed through an intersectional lens that considers gender power relations, social class, and inequality in urban space. Women's work in the illegal parking sector not only reflects a crisis of labor protection, but also symbolic injustice in the distribution of social dignity. Therefore, efforts to empower poor women in the city must go beyond economic interventions, but also target the social structures that cause their exclusion in the first place. This research serves as a starting point for expanding academic discussions and policy advocacy related to the right to the city and decent work for marginalized women.

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Association Between Gender Norms and Experiences of Sexual Violence with Sexual Violence Acts among University of Jember Students

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ABSTRACT

Sexual violence is a significant problem within university environments, impacting not only the physical and psychological well-being of victims but also deteriorating the overall academic atmosphere. This cross-sectional analytic study aimed to examine the relationship between gender norms, prior experiences of sexual violence, and the perpetration of sexual violence among students at the University of Jember. A total of 176 students participated, selected through stratified proportionate random sampling. Data were collected using structured interviews and analyzed via Chi-square tests with a significance level set at 5%. The findings indicated that students with traditional gender norms, higher semester levels, and previous victimization experiences were significantly more likely to engage in sexual violence behavior. Conversely, no significant relationship was found between gender or age and perpetration. These results emphasize the influence of cultural and social factors on sexual violence behaviors in academic settings. The study recommends implementing educational programs promoting gender equality and providing psychological counseling to support students, particularly those with trauma histories, as effective measures to reduce the incidence of sexual violence on campus.

KEYWORDS: *sexual violence, gender norms, university students, perpetration*

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO (2017), sexual violence includes unwanted acts, attempts, comments, or sexual coercion. The Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 30 of 2021 states that sexual violence may take the form of verbal, non-physical, or physical actions, or through information technology. Data from Komnas Perempuan indicate an increase in sexual violence complaints to an average of 17 cases per day, nearly twice as many as in 2020. In 2023, there were 29,883 recorded cases of sexual violence in Indonesia, with the majority of victims being women but also men, and perpetrators predominantly aged 18–40

years (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). Sexual violence often occurs in places considered safe, such as schools, campuses, dormitories, and workplaces, perpetrated by individuals known to the victims (Rusyidi et al., 2019).

At the University of Jember, a SATGAS PPKS survey revealed that 55% of respondents doubted the campus's safety against sexual violence, and 28% had experienced sexually nuanced verbal harassment (PPKS Universitas Jember, 2023). Experiencing victimization can lead someone to become a perpetrator of sexual violence due to its long-term impact on perceptions, where victims may come to believe that violence can be inflicted upon those perceived as weak (Weber & Smith, 2010). Gender norms deeply rooted in society position men as dominant and women as less privileged, triggering sexual violence by men against women (Kearns et al., 2020). However, numerous cases also show women committing non-physical violence against men. Male victims are often reluctant to report due to the stigma of losing their "masculinity" (Amin et al., 2018).

This study is important to understand the relationship between gender norms and experiences of sexual violence with sexual violence behaviors among students of the University of Jember, given the rising cases of violence in higher education institutions and the limited number of studies focusing on perpetrators' perspectives.

METHODS

Participant

This research was conducted as a quantitative observational study. The method used was analytic with a cross-sectional approach. The study involved 176 students of the University of Jember, selected using stratified proportionate random sampling.

Instruments

This study employed three primary instruments: the Sexual Violence Acts Questionnaire, the G-NORM Scale Questionnaire, and the Sexual Violence Experience Questionnaire. The Sexual Violence Acts Questionnaire and the Sexual Violence Experience Questionnaire each consisted of 15 items arranged according to categories of sexual violence. The G-NORM Scale Questionnaire used in this study was a modification of Sedlander's research and consisted of 10 items. All questionnaires were tested for validity and reliability at the University of Jember with respondents from different study programs, thus confirming their validity and reliability.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this research was univariate and bivariate. Bivariate analysis was carried out using the chi-square test. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

An overview of sexual violence acts

Sexual violence acts in this study were obtained from students' questionnaire responses, which revealed that nearly half (48.9%) of University of Jember students reported having committed sexual violence. Respondents indicated that verbal sexual violence was the most frequently committed form (41.48%), particularly making sexual comments about someone's body or clothing. Non-physical forms of sexual violence also appeared at a relatively high rate (21.59%), with the most common act being following someone without consent. Sexual violence through information and communication technology was also reported within the academic environment, with 11.93% of students acknowledging such behavior. The least reported form was physical sexual violence (7.95%); however, 2.84% of respondents admitted to having committed rape or attempted rape, a behavior that should never occur within a higher education setting.

Association between respondents' characteristics and sexual violence acts

The respondents in this study were 176 students of the University of Jember. Most of the respondents were female, totaling 111 students (63.1%), while 65 respondents were male (36.9%). The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years. The majority were between 18 and 21 years old (69.9%) compared to those aged 22–24 years (30.1%). Regarding educational level (semester), respondents were categorized into early level (1st & 3rd semesters), intermediate level (5th & 7th semesters), and final level (8th semester and above). Most respondents were at the intermediate level (60.2%), followed by the early level (32.4%), and the fewest were at the final level (7.4%).

The following are the results of the Chi-square test analysis on the relationship between respondents' characteristics and sexual violence acts among students.

The results of the Chi-square test between sex and sexual violence acts showed a significance value of $p = 0.941 > 0.05$, indicating that there is no association between gender and sexual violence acts. The absence of an association suggests a very weak relationship between the variables. The significance value for age was $p = 0.717 > 0.05$, indicating that there is no association between age and sexual violence acts among students. Similarly, the absence of an association suggests a very weak relationship between the variables. Meanwhile, the significance value for semester was $p = 0.035 < 0.05$, indicating that there is an association between semester level and sexual violence acts among students. The contingency coefficient value of 0.191

indicates that the strength of this association is weak. This finding suggests that the higher the level of education (semester), the greater the likelihood of students having committed sexual violence acts.

Table 1. Analysis of the Association between Characteristics and Sexual Violence Acts

Characteristics	Sexual Violence Acts						<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Contingency Coefficient</i>
	Never		Ever		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Sex								
Male	33	18,8	32	18,2	65	36,9	0,941	0,006
Female	57	32,4	54	30,7	111	63,1		
Ages								
18-21 Years Old	64	36,4	59	33,5	123	69,9	0,717	0,027
22-24 Years Old	26	14,8	27	15,3	53	30,1		
Educational Level (semester)								
Early Level	35	19,9	22	12,5	57	32,4	0,035*	0,191
Intermediate Level	52	29,5	54	30,7	106	60,2		
Final Level	3	1,7	10	5,7	13	7,4		

Association between Gender Norms and Sexual Violence Acts

Gender norms are social rules or standards that regulate behaviors and roles considered appropriate for individuals based on their sex within a society. Gender norms are divided into two categories: traditional and egalitarian. The traditional norm refers to social standards, as perceived by respondents, that do not support gender equality, whereas the egalitarian norm refers to social standards that support gender equality. The majority of respondents supported gender equality (egalitarian norm), totaling 135 students (76.7%), while 41 respondents (23.3%) adhered to traditional norms.

The following are the results of the Chi-square test analysis on the relationship between gender norms and sexual violence acts among students.

Table 2. Analysis of the Association between Gender Norms and Sexual Violence Acts

Gender Norms	Sexual Violence Acts						<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Contingency Coefficient</i>
	Never		Ever		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Tradisional	13	7,4	28	15,9	41	23,3	0,004*	0,209
Egaliter	77	43,8	58	33	135	76,7		

The Chi-square statistical test yielded a significance value of $p = 0.004 < 0.05$, indicating a significant association between experiences of sexual violence and sexual violence acts among students. The contingency coefficient value of 0.209 shows that the strength of the association between the two variables falls within the moderate category. This association suggests that respondents with traditional norms were more likely to have committed sexual violence acts compared to respondents with egalitarian norms, who were more likely to have never committed sexual violence acts.

Association between experiences of sexual violence and sexual violence acts

An overview of experiences of sexual violence obtained from the questionnaire responses shows that a greater proportion of respondents reported having experienced sexual violence, accounting for 68.7%, compared to respondents who reported not having such experiences, which accounted for 31.3%.

The following are the results of the Chi-square test analysis on the relationship between experiences of sexual violence and sexual violence acts among students.

Table 3. Analysis of the Association between Experiences of Sexual Violence and Sexual Violence Acts

Experiences of Sexual Violence	Sexual Violence Acts						<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Contingency Coefficient</i>
	Never		Ever		Total			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Never	89	50,6	1	0,6	90	51,1	<0,0001*	0,699
Ever	1	0,6	85	48,3	86	48,9		

The Chi-square statistical test yielded a significance value of $p < 0.0001$, indicating a significant association between experiences of sexual violence and sexual violence acts among students. The contingency coefficient value of 0.699 shows that the strength of the association between the two variables falls within the strong category. This finding suggests that the more experiences of sexual violence respondents had, the more frequently they engaged in sexual violence acts compared to respondents who had no such experiences.

Discussion

Sexual violence acts

In this study, sexual violence acts were categorized into four forms based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30 of 2021: verbal, non-physical, physical, and those involving information and communication technology. The findings revealed that 41.48% of respondents had committed at least one form of verbal sexual violence against others. The most frequently reported forms of verbal sexual violence were making sexual comments about the body and clothing, sexual jokes, and catcalling or provocative sounds. This study is consistent with previous research, which reported that 72.7% of respondents admitted to having engaged in various forms of verbal sexual harassment (Pangastuti & Fajarwati, 2024), including indecent comments, intrusive questions about personal life, flirtations, whistling, and telling obscene jokes.

In addition to verbal forms, there were also non-physical forms of sexual violence. The findings showed that 21.59% of respondents had committed at least one form of non-physical sexual violence against others. The most frequently reported non-physical acts in this study were following someone without consent, winking at someone's intimate parts, and persistently pressuring someone to engage in a relationship. Non-physical sexual violence

remains a prevalent issue in Indonesian society, with a considerable number of perpetrators, even though such acts are often trivialized (Kemal & Pratama Hapsari, 2023). Other studies have also highlighted that perpetrators of non-physical sexual violence often do not realize that their behavior constitutes harassment (Mahalieng et al., 2022). Therefore, education and law enforcement are crucial so that perpetrators become aware of the consequences of their actions.

The next form of sexual violence is physical. The findings showed that 7.95% of respondents had committed at least one form of physical sexual violence against someone. The most frequently reported physical sexual violence acts in this study were touching someone without consent and unwanted and overt sexual touching (e.g., touching breasts, buttocks, or genitals, as well as attempted kissing). This finding is in line with previous research, which revealed that 90.2% of university students had experienced sexual violence during their time in higher education (Mantiri et al., 2025). However, the majority of reported cases involved verbal and non-physical forms, while physical sexual violence was less frequently reported.

The fourth form of sexual violence is through information and communication technology. The findings showed that 11.93% of respondents had committed at least one act of sexual violence through information and communication technology against someone. The most frequently reported form of this type of sexual violence was sending unwanted messages containing sexual content, for example, via text messaging applications, email, social media, or other platforms. This result is consistent with the annual report, indicating that online gender-based violence is among the most prevalent forms of sexual violence, with 838 cases (66%) recorded in 2023, in which perpetrators were identified as coming from diverse backgrounds, including students (Komnas Perempuan, 2024).

Association between respondents' characteristics and sexual violence acts

SEX

Sex refers to biological differences that relate to physical distinctions associated with reproductive organs. In this study, sex was categorized into female and male. The findings showed that most respondents were female (63.1%), while 36.9% were male. Previous studies have indicated that male respondents were more likely to have committed sexual violence. However, this does not mean that females did not engage in sexual violence. In line with the study by Hidayat & Setyanto (2020), most respondents were female (62%) and male (38%), with the majority of sexual violence being committed by men. Nevertheless, there were also cases of men who became victims of sexual violence perpetrated by women.

Based on the findings of this study, there was no significant association between sex and sexual violence acts. Although many male respondents reported having committed sexual violence, this does not mean that female respondents did not engage in such acts. This finding is consistent with previous research, which stated that sex was not associated with sexual violence acts;

although cases of sexual violence were predominantly perpetrated by men, this fact does not negate that women also committed sexual violence (Panggabean et al., 2022). The results of this study are also in line with other research, which concluded that sex does not have a significant association with sexual violence acts, as both men and women can often become perpetrators as well as victims of sexual violence (Hutami et al., 2022).

AGE

In addition to sex, age was also one of the characteristics examined in this study. The findings showed that respondents were between 18 and 24 years old. This age range indicates that respondents were in adolescence. Adolescence is known as a transitional stage of personal development, including emotional, physical, cognitive, and social aspects, in the process of forming self-identity (Aulia et al., 2022). Adolescents aged 18–21 are categorized as being in late adolescence, which is characterized by physical growth that has usually reached its maximum development (Atiqah et al., 2024). During this phase, physical changes and sexual maturity due to hormonal increases lead to strong sexual drives, heightened curiosity about sex, and a tendency to explore sexual identity and orientation. This process is also influenced by cognitive development, emotional instability, and external factors such as peers and media. These conditions make adolescent sexual behavior diverse, often occurring without sufficient knowledge or self-control, which places adolescents in a vulnerable group at risk of reproductive and social health issues (Hanifah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, respondents aged 22–24 were categorized as being in early adulthood. Early adulthood is a stage of searching for stability and reproductive maturity, often marked by various challenges such as emotional tension, social isolation, commitment, dependency, value changes, creativity, and adjustment to a new life phase (Paputungan, 2023).

Based on the findings of this study, there was no significant association between age and sexual violence acts. This result is consistent with previous research, which reported that age was not significantly associated with sexual violence among adolescents, as sexual violence is influenced by various complex factors that are more dominant than age (Panggabean et al., 2022). This indicates that sexual violence can occur across different age groups, particularly among adolescents and young adults; however, age variation within these groups does not directly determine the risk of or involvement in sexual violence (Mannika, 2018). The findings of this study are also in line with other research, which stated that age does not always significantly correlate with cases of violence, including sexual violence (Hutahaean et al., 2024).

Educational level (semester)

An individual's characteristics in experiencing and committing sexual violence in higher education settings are strongly influenced by their level of education or semester of study. First-year students (semesters 1 and 3) tend to be more vulnerable to sexual violence due to their limited understanding of personal boundaries, victims' rights, and the reporting and protection mechanisms available on campus (Zarkasi & Siregar, 2024). This condition is

further exacerbated by the psychological and social unpreparedness of new students in dealing with campus dynamics, including power imbalances with seniors or academic staff. In addition, early-semester students often lack strong social support networks to rely on when facing sexual violence, which makes them reluctant to report or even unaware that they have become victims of sexual violence (Awaru & Ahmad, 2023).

Conversely, students in higher semesters (semesters 5 and 7) may experience and potentially commit sexual violence in various forms, including verbal, non-physical, physical, and digital media-based acts (Mantiri et al., 2025). However, in other higher education contexts, an interesting phenomenon has been observed in which final-year students (semesters 9 and 11) sometimes hold inaccurate perceptions of the definition of sexual violence, such as denying that derogatory remarks or the sharing of sexual digital content constitute sexual violence (Yudhawasthi et al., 2023). This misconception contributes to the normalization of sexual violence among final-year students.

Based on the findings of this study, it was identified that there is an association in which students in higher semesters were more likely to commit sexual violence compared to those in earlier or final semesters. The level of education plays a role in shaping students' knowledge, self-control, and attitudes toward sexual violence, where the higher the semester, the more complex social dynamics and interactions on campus may influence the risks and behaviors related to sexual violence (Adistya & Mudzakkir, 2023). Students in higher semesters also demonstrated different levels of awareness regarding the possibility of close peers being perpetrators of sexual violence compared to early-semester students, indicating a shift in attitudes and perceptions as education level progresses (Yudhawasthi et al., 2023). This finding suggests that the level of education (semester) plays a significant role in the dynamics of sexual violence on campus.

Association between gender norms and sexual violence acts

Gender norms are one of the factors in overcoming external inhibitors. Gender norms refer to respondents' perspectives or beliefs that discriminate against individuals based on their sex. In this study, gender norms were categorized into two types: traditional and egalitarian. Traditional norms are social standards that, according to respondents, do not support gender equality, whereas egalitarian norms are social standards that support gender equality (Lamont, 2014). The findings revealed that 76.7% of respondents held egalitarian norms, while 23.3% adhered to traditional norms. This indicates that the majority of respondents supported egalitarian norms, meaning they endorsed gender equality. These findings are consistent with previous research, which demonstrated that students generally believe individuals should be free to act as they wish without restrictions based on gender (Astuty, 2024).

Based on the findings of this study, it was identified that students with traditional gender norms were more likely to commit sexual violence compared to those with egalitarian norms. Egalitarian gender norms refer to the belief that women and men have equal rights and opportunities and should be treated

fairly regardless of sex (Pessin, 2019). In contrast, traditional gender norms portray women as submissive and vulnerable, while men are perceived as strong, unemotional, and dominant. The results of this study demonstrate that students who held traditional gender norms engaged in sexual violence more frequently than those with egalitarian norms. Previous research has emphasized that patriarchal social, cultural, and religious norms shape adolescents' perceptions of gender roles. Despite a relatively high level of understanding regarding gender-based violence, cases of sexual harassment and violence continue to occur (Muhani et al., 2021). This suggests that traditional gender norms play a significant role in the occurrence of sexual violence. These findings are consistent with other studies, which have shown that traditional gender norms—characterizing men as superior—significantly increase the likelihood of committing violence against partners, whereas more egalitarian gender role attitudes may reduce the propensity to engage in sexual violence (Aprilia & Masyhadi, 2022).

Association between sexual violence experiences and sexual violence acts

Sexual violence experience is one of the factors related to overcoming internal inhibitors. In this study, experiences of sexual violence were categorized into four forms based on the Regulation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30 of 2021, namely verbal, non-physical, physical, and information and communication technology-based forms. The findings revealed that 61.93% of respondents had experienced at least one form of verbal sexual violence from others. This result is consistent with previous research, which showed that 78.8% of respondents frequently experienced verbal sexual violence perpetrated by those in their surroundings (Fajariyah et al., 2022). The most common forms of verbal sexual violence reported were sexual comments about the body and clothing, sexually suggestive jokes, and catcalling, including whistling or other provocative sounds.

In addition to verbal forms, non-physical sexual violence was also reported. The findings showed that 51.7% of respondents had experienced at least one instance of non-physical sexual violence. The most frequently reported forms of non-physical sexual violence in this study were receiving intrusive stares that caused discomfort and deliberate winks directed at intimate body parts. Many people perceive non-physical sexual violence as commonplace, leading both victims and perpetrators to be unaware that such behaviors constitute sexual violence (Dewi & Swardhana, 2023).

The next form of sexual violence is physical. The findings showed that 42.61% of respondents had experienced at least one instance of physical sexual violence. The most frequently reported forms of physical sexual violence in this study included being touched without consent and experiencing unwanted and overt sexual touching (e.g., touching of the breasts, buttocks, or genitals, as well as attempted kissing). Physical sexual violence is one of the more prevalent forms of sexual violence and represents a major concern in the protection of women in Indonesia. Data from the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) and the Online Information System for the Protection of

Women and Children (SIMFONI PPA) indicate that the number of reported cases of physical and sexual violence nationwide remains considerably high (Komnas Perempuan, 2024).

The fourth form of sexual violence is that which occurs through information and communication technology. The findings showed that 47.73% of respondents had experienced at least one instance of sexual violence through digital platforms. The most frequently reported form in this study was the receipt of unwanted messages containing sexual content, delivered through text messaging applications, email, social media, or other channels. Data from the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) indicate that cases of sexual violence perpetrated through information and communication technology in Indonesia have increased fourfold in recent years. In 2019, 281 cases were recorded, whereas in the first ten months of 2024 alone, the number had already reached 659 cases (Komnas Perempuan, 2024).

Based on the findings of this study, it was revealed that students with experiences of sexual violence were more likely to engage in sexual violence acts. This result is consistent with previous research, which reported that several perpetrators of sexual violence against minors had experienced sexual violence themselves during childhood (Sinta & Khairi, 2023). Such past trauma serves as a driving or triggering factor for deviant sexual behaviors in adulthood, including the perpetration of sexual violence later in life. These findings are also in line with other studies indicating that prior experiences of violence increase the likelihood of individuals either experiencing or committing subsequent sexual violence. Thus, experiences of sexual violence represent a significant risk factor for future sexual violence perpetration (Nasution et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study showed that the gender distribution of respondents consisted of females (63.1%) and males (36.1%). The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, with the majority falling between 18 and 21 years (69.9%) compared to those aged 22–24 years (30.1%). Respondents' educational levels (semester) were categorized into early (semesters 1 and 3), advanced (semesters 5 and 7), and final (beyond semester 8). The analysis indicated a significant association between educational level and sexual violence acts, suggesting that the higher the semester, the greater the likelihood of students engaging in sexual violence. By contrast, gender and age were not significantly associated. The study also identified the role of gender norms in sexual violence behavior. Respondents' gender norms were classified into traditional (23.3%) and egalitarian (76.7%). The analysis revealed a significant association between gender norms and sexual violence acts, showing that those with traditional norms were more likely to engage in sexual violence. This finding underscores that biased gender perspectives increase the risk of violent behavior, whereas egalitarian norms tend to protect students from such behaviors. In addition, prior experiences of sexual violence were found to be significantly associated with sexual violence acts. Respondents who had previously experienced sexual violence were more likely to become perpetrators compared to those without similar experiences. Chi-square analysis demonstrated a strong relationship,

indicating that past traumatic experiences may serve as a substantial risk factor influencing future sexual violence behaviors.

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Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in The Workplace: Patterns and impact on women employed in the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is an emerging and less explored dimension of workplace violence. This is particularly so in the hospitality sector, where women often occupy vulnerable, customer-facing roles. Despite increasing global recognition, little empirical evidence exists from low- and middle-income countries such as Zimbabwe, where digitalization intersects with entrenched gender and labor inequalities. This paper investigates the patterns, impact, and institutional responses to TFGBV among women employed in Zimbabwe's hospitality sector. A mixed-methods design was used, combining survey data from women working in the hospitality sector with document and policy analysis. Interpreted through feminist political economy and intersectional lenses, our findings demonstrate how digital technologies reproduce structural inequalities in feminized labor sectors, transforming existing vulnerabilities into new sites of control and exploitation. Unwanted sexual messages, online slander, and non-consensual image sharing were the most prevalent forms of TFGBV, frequently perpetrated by supervisors, colleagues, and clients. Further analysis showed that these digital abuses are embedded in workplace hierarchies and gendered power relations, resulting in psychosocial and economic harm, at the same time silencing women through fear of retaliation and weak institutional redress. Current workplace and national frameworks insufficiently address TFGBV, lacking specificity, enforcement, and survivor-centered safeguards. As such, TFGBV is both a digital rights and labor rights concern requiring gender-responsive reforms in Zimbabwe's labor industry.

KEYWORDS: *technology-facilitated gender-based violence, hospitality, workplace safety, feminist political economy, digital rights, Zimbabwe.*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse around gender-based violence (GBV) has historically focused on physical and sexual forms. The digital realm presents difficulties that necessitate a distinct conceptual understanding of Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), distinguishing it from traditional forms of violence by its reliance on technological platforms for perpetration. TFGBV represents an emergent global challenge that disproportionately affects women and girls, as well as marginalizing communities through various digital platforms (Bansal et al., 2023; Quilty & Flynn, 2025). This emerging violence comprises various abusive behaviors, including digital dating abuse, intimate partner cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse, and online sexual harassment. The violence is facilitated through GPS tracking, spyware, social media platforms, and other digital tools (Henry et al., 2020; Afrouz, 2021). Despite the growing prevalence, empirical research on TFGBV remains scarce, with gaps in evidence from several regions and a limited understanding of effective interventions (Sheikh & Rogers, 2023; Philbrick et al., 2022).

Scholars emphasize that TFGBV requires conceptual frameworks that move beyond viewing technology as merely facilitating traditional violence, instead recognizing the intersection of human, social, and technical factors (Powell & Henry, 2017). The concept of "technology-facilitated coercive control" highlights how digital media platforms both mediate and regulate patterns of abuse within relationships and structural inequalities (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). TFGBV must be understood through structural and intersectional lenses, as individualistic approaches risk trivializing digitally mediated harms and missing opportunities for systemic intervention (Bailey & Burkell, 2021).

The hospitality sector, globally and specifically in regions such as Zimbabwe, presents a particular vulnerability to TFGBV due to its innate characteristics. This sector is largely public-facing, involving extensive interactions between staff, guests, and the broader public, often mediated through digital platforms for bookings, reviews, and marketing purposes. Globally, although women constitute the majority of the tourism and hospitality workforce, they remain under-represented in management and leadership roles (Hutchings et al., 2020; Silva & Couto, 2023; De Carvalho, 2017). This numerical dominance does not translate into equitable career advancement, with women often concentrated in part-time, low-paid positions that frequently extend into domestic roles, such as housekeeping and room service (Silva & Couto, 2023; Cave & Kilic, 2010).

The feminization of care work in the hospitality sector, where women are often assigned roles emphasizing attentiveness and emotional labor (Coffey et al., 2023), inadvertently heightens their exposure to violence, including technology-facilitated forms. Likewise, the tourism and hospitality industry's growing reliance on ICTs for operations, customer engagement, and communication, while boosting efficiency and reach, simultaneously creates new digital vulnerabilities for female employees. This digital transformation, while it offers potential for service delivery, also opens doors for new modes of violence. The challenge is compounded in the Zimbabwean context, where gender inequality persists across education, employment, and leadership contexts. Studies consistently show that women face significant inequities, and

GBV is a human rights violation rooted in these inequalities (Siziba et al., 2022; Goredema & Muwanzi, 2023).

TFGBV in the workplace, particularly in the global south, remains understudied. Existing research often focuses on high-income countries, leaving a gap in understanding the prevalence and impact of TFGBV in low- and middle-income countries. The dearth of research in this area implies that women's experiences of digital violence and their consequences are often silenced, mirroring a trend where women's experiences of violence are neglected in mainstream discussions. This study seeks to amplify these voices and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of GBV in contemporary workplaces. Specifically, it addresses the hospitality and tourism sector in Zimbabwe. To achieve this, the research sought to answer three questions:

1. What forms and patterns of TFGBV are experienced by women in the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the impacts of TFGBV on affected women in the workplace?
3. How effective are existing workplace policies and legal frameworks in addressing TFGBV in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding TFGBV

TFGBV encompasses a range of abusive behaviors perpetrated through digital platforms, including online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse, and digital coercion (Henry & Powell, 2018; Bailey et al., 2021). Research demonstrates TFGBV is a global challenge affecting both high-income and low- and middle-income countries, with notable prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (Makinde et al., 2021; Sheikh & Rogers, 2023; Bansal et al., 2023). Studies have consistently shown that women, girls, and sexual minorities are disproportionately affected, with young women being overrepresented as victims (Henry & Powell, 2020; Bansal et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated incidents of technology-facilitated violence (Bansal et al., 2023). Research in Sub-Saharan Africa confirms that men also experience TFGBV, albeit less frequently, with women more frequently reporting repeated sexual requests and men experiencing violent threats (Makinde et al., 2021). Despite its pervasive nature, empirical research on TFGBV remains limited, particularly in non-Western contexts, highlighting gaps in understanding its prevalence and impact (Henry & Powell, 2020; Quilty & Flynn, 2025).

Research identifies several key typologies of TFGBV, including cyber harassment, which involves persistent unwanted digital communication aimed at distressing individuals (Henry & Powell, 2020; Powell & Henry, 2017). Cyberstalking represents a more severe form involving electronic stalking that often escalates to threats and creates significant fear (Henry & Powell, 2020). Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) involves non-consensual creation or distribution of intimate images, causing devastating long-term impact on victims (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2022; Henry & Powell, 2016). Closely related to IBSA is doxing, which is publishing private or identifying information online

without consent and represents a form of gendered harassment motivated by extortion, silencing, and retribution (Anderson & Wood, 2021; Eckert & Metzger-Riftkin, 2020). These behaviors show a gendered pattern, with women experiencing higher victimization rates in certain categories, while men show higher perpetration rates (Powell & Henry, 2016; Gámez-Guadix et al., 2022).

At this stage, it is critical to distinguish between TFGBV and offline GBV. Both forms of violence share underlying motivations linked to control, power, and gender inequality, but their mechanisms and consequences differ in three main ways (Rani et al., 2023). Offline GBV, including sexual violence, (intimate) partner violence (IPV), and child marriage, is often rooted in patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender norms. On the other hand, TFGBV exploits the internet and digital technologies, enabling perpetrators to act with a degree of anonymity that is often harder to achieve in offline contexts. This anonymity can embolden perpetrators and complicate identification and prosecution. Secondly, the geographical reach of TFGBV is virtually limitless; an act committed from one location can affect a victim anywhere in the world, transcending the physical boundaries that limit offline GBV. Thirdly, the potentially permanent nature of digital content means that once images, messages, or information are shared online, they can be difficult, if not impossible, to fully erase, leading to prolonged victimization. This persistent digital footprint can continue to harm victims long after the initial incident. For instance, research indicates that TFGBV can continually contribute to mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and behavioral disorders, particularly among adolescents (Bailey & Burkell, 2021).

TFGBV also presents challenges for evidence collection and legal frameworks. Digital evidence requires specialized forensic techniques, and legal systems are still evolving to address these technologically mediated forms of violence (Bailey & Mathen, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2016). Research reveals that mechanisms of moral disengagement in TFGBV vary based on participant gender, sexist beliefs, and victim-perpetrator relationship, with higher levels of disengagement observed among men and individuals holding sexist attitudes (Martínez-Bacaicoa et al., 2023). The internet's "toxic disinhibition" escalates sexual aggression, as individuals feel less accountable online than in face-to-face interactions (Zhong et al., 2020). Online environments facilitate moral disengagement through reduced social-emotional cues and ease of communication dissemination (Runions & Bak, 2015).

TFGBV causes mental health challenges across diverse populations. Research demonstrates that TFGBV affects women across demographic groups and may even harm individuals without direct internet access (Martinez et al., 2023). Among adolescents, TFGBV manifests in various forms and causes psychological challenges, including anxiety (38%), low self-esteem (25%), and mental distress (18%), with 58% of girls across 22 countries reporting experiences of online harassment (Ayodeji, 2025).

GBV in the workplace

GBV in all its forms manifests in the workplace, in contemporary times, through digital harassment targeting women employees. This is supported by both global and regional evidence, stressing its pervasive nature and impact on mental health, job satisfaction, and safety (Saungweme et al., 2024; Sterud & Finne, 2022). Industries with high online visibility, such as IT, media, and service sectors, are particularly susceptible to this experience. The hospitality and tourism sectors, central to feminist labor studies, exemplify how gendered vulnerabilities, precarious contracts, and multi-faceted customer-worker relationships exacerbate the risk of TFGBV.

Scholarship indicates that victims of workplace sexual harassment, including digital forms, face poor physical and mental health outcomes (Blindow et al., 2024). Digitalization further complicates this, as evidenced by the rapid adoption of digital tools across various sectors, which, while facilitating operational efficiency, also introduces new avenues for harassment. The reliance on digital platforms for customer interaction and service delivery in the hospitality and tourism industry intensifies this exposure. For instance, the use of chatbots and other advanced technologies in hospitality creates new interaction points that could be exploited for digital harassment (Kumar et al., 2025; Otegui et al., 2024), despite their intended purpose of improving efficiency and customer experience.

Feminist labor studies reveal that women in hospitality and tourism face pervasive sexual harassment within risky employment conditions. The workforce is predominantly female, concentrated in low-paid, temporary positions with limited opportunities for career advancement (Zampoukos & Ioannides, 2011; Martínez-Gayo & Quintana, 2020). Sexual harassment is normalized across multiple hospitality sectors, from hotel room attendants experiencing guest-initiated harassment (Kensbock et al., 2014) to spa therapists enduring client misconduct (Frost et al., 2021). Power imbalances between employers, customers, and female employees create environments where harassment thrives with impunity (Vizcaino et al., 2020; Hadjisolomou et al., 2023). Workers often feel compelled to tolerate harassment due to precarious employment conditions and a lack of management support (Hadjisolomou et al., 2023). These conditions result in health risks, emotional labor demands, and high staff turnover, while perpetuating systematic exploitation of women workers (Sarosi, 2017).

Customer abuse and harassment in hospitality and tourism sectors represent endemic workplace crimes that are systematically normalized and underestimated (Mitsakis et al., 2024). Research demonstrates that verbal abuse and sexual harassment from customers are the most prevalent forms of misbehavior, commonly dismissed as “part of the job” and “not a big deal” (Booyens et al., 2022). The structure of the service economy itself endogenously creates conditions that enable customer abuse through promotion of customer sovereignty, weak labor positions, and status imbalances between customers and workers (Korczynski & Evans, 2013). Women employees face particular challenges, with sexual harassment being a silenced experience that disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including migrant workers and

young employees (Vizcaino et al., 2020). Management often expects workers to tolerate abusive behavior, with dismissive attitudes to incident reports constituting “social washing” (Booyens et al., 2022). The nature of the hotel industry and power imbalances between guests and staff further exacerbate harassment issues (Guerrier & Adib, 2000).

Policy and legal frameworks

Zimbabwe's legal framework provides for addressing GBV, though specific provisions for TFGBV in the workplace require further strengthening. Section 56 of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees gender equality, with Section 51 protecting inherent human dignity, thereby providing a legal basis to challenge all forms of violence, including technology-enabled abuse (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). These constitutional provisions support other legislative efforts aimed at safeguarding individuals from discrimination and harm.

The Labor Act (Chapter 28:01) is a key instrument for regulating employment relations and prohibiting unfair labor practices, including sexual harassment. However, the increasing prevalence of digital platforms necessitates a review of the Labor Act's scope to include cyber harassment and technology-enabled abuse within workplace environments. Research indicates that technology enables new virtual forms of violence and exacerbates existing ones, highlighting the urgent need for legal adaptation. The traditional understanding of workplace harassment, which often focuses on physical proximity, needs to evolve to address digital interactions that occur beyond physical location.

Complementing the Labor Act is the Cybersecurity and Data Protection Act (2021), a more recent legislative development designed to combat cybercrimes such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. This Act holds significant relevance for employees who may encounter TFGBV through digital communications, online systems, or social media interactions related to their work. Its provisions, particularly Part XI Section 33, offer avenues for legal recourse against perpetrators of online abuse, thus by extension provide for a safer digital environment for women in the workplace. However, the effective application of this Act requires clear guidelines on its interaction with labor laws in addressing workplace-specific digital harassment.

Workplace Human Resources (HR) policies and codes of conduct serve as essential operational tools for addressing TFGBV across all sectors. These policies are expected to proactively include explicit provisions that safeguard employees from technology-enabled harassment, thereby moving beyond general anti-harassment statements. Comprehensive HR policies should define digital harassment, establish clear reporting mechanisms that ensure the safety and confidentiality of victims, and implement mandatory anti-harassment training covering online conduct and behavior. Effective grievance-handling procedures and punitive measures for verified violations are also essential and must align with national laws and international standards.

Comparative perspectives from international and regional frameworks offer valuable guidance for Zimbabwe. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), sets an international benchmark by explicitly recognizing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work, including those occurring through information and communication technologies (Larion, 2024). This convention advocates for the inclusion of its provisions in national laws, urging member states to adopt a gender-responsive approach to preventing and addressing violence and harassment.

Regionally, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development also addresses workplace gender equality and advocates for measures to eliminate GBV. Member states, including Zimbabwe, are encouraged to establish mechanisms that protect employees from all forms of workplace violence, including both physical and digital forms (van Eerdewijk & van De Sand, 2014). Learning from SADC countries that have successfully implemented effective workplace digital ethics and harassment policies can provide practical models for Zimbabwe. The high incidence of GBV within the SADC region, with at least 68% of women experiencing some form of GBV during their lifetime (UNICEF, 2023), further underscores the urgency of such collaborative action.

Theoretical framework

TFGBV in the workplace necessitates a holistic theoretical and conceptual framework that adequately captures its manifold nature and impact. This framework draws upon the feminist political economy of labor, intersectionality, and organizational behavior and workplace violence frameworks, each framework offering distinct yet complementary lenses through which to analyze this tech-driven violence. These three frameworks allow for an inclusive understanding of how gender, power, precarious work conditions, and social identities intersect to shape experiences of TFGBV.

Feminist political economy

Feminist political economy provides a lens for understanding how gender, work, and power intersect to create vulnerabilities for women in precarious industries. Research demonstrates that structural inequalities in the hospitality and tourism sectors expose women to sexual harassment, with gendered roles and power imbalances increasing risks for vulnerable groups, including migrant and young employees (Vizcaino et al., 2020). The devaluation of feminized care work renders women's contributions invisible while augmenting exploitation (Reyes & Sutton, 2021). Digital platforms in the hospitality sector, particularly those that exploit migrant women, often operate within regulatory contexts that perpetuate intersectional inequalities (Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2022).

These structural vulnerabilities create mechanisms where women workers face heightened risks of violence and harassment across industries (Minnotte &

Legerski, 2019; True, 2012). This framework positions TFGBV not as an individual act but as a systemic issue rooted in political and economic structures that perpetuate gender inequality in the workplace. It provides a critical perspective on how the inherent precarity of labor in industries like hospitality, combined with existing gender hierarchies, creates environments conducive to technology-facilitated abuse.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality explains how social and political identities, such as class, age, race, and gender, converge to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege in cases of TFGBV. This framework recognizes that women employees are not a monolithic group; their experiences of TFGBV are shaped by the intersections of their identities. Research indicates that women's experiences cannot be understood solely through gender but must consider how gender intersects with other identity markers, such as race, class, age, and marital status (Kumar et al., 2023; Zigomo, 2022). For instance, studies of Indigenous women have revealed certain intersections, where ethnicity and gender create compounded challenges in entrepreneurship and experiences of violence (Croce, 2019; Nayak, 2024).

This intersectional approach moves beyond treating women as a homogeneous group and recognizes that social identity categories operate simultaneously to produce varied experiences of marginalization and privilege (Smooth, 2013; Ordaz & Rodrigo, 2015). Similarly, women in Zimbabwe may experience TFGBV differently depending on their socio-economic status, age, marital status, and other social markers. Younger women, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or women with specific ethnic or racial identities, might face amplified vulnerabilities. Therefore, an intersectional approach prevents simplistic interpretations; instead, it highlights the power dynamics that produce varied forms and impacts of TFGBV on women workers.

Organizational behavior

Organizational behavior and workplace violence frameworks provide direct insights into the manifestations, prevalence, and consequences of harassment within an organizational context. These frameworks analyze the dynamics of workplace violence, which encompasses physical assault, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment, and their significant impact on employees' well-being and organizational productivity. For example, a study on health workers in Ghana revealed that verbal abuse was the most common form of workplace violence, affecting 53.4% of surveyed individuals, while sexual harassment affected 7.4% (Tawiah et al., 2024). While this study focuses on healthcare, these patterns of abuse are often mirrored in customer-facing roles within the hospitality sector, where employees frequently interact with the public.

The hospitality sector faces similar challenges, with sexual harassment affecting employee wellbeing despite conformance behaviors used as coping strategies (Oriade et al., 2023). These frameworks identify organizational

consequences, including reduced productivity, compromised work attitudes, and a damaged corporate image (Asamani, 2016), while also highlighting the need for all-inclusive prevention strategies, such as improved reporting systems, training programs, and policy interventions (Lim et al., 2022). The framework further enables the identification of risk factors within organizational structures and cultures that facilitate TFGBV, including inadequate policies, lack of reporting mechanisms, or a culture of impunity. It also guides the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies, such as comprehensive training, clear codes of conduct, and accessible support systems for victims.

These lenses collectively offer a holistic understanding of TFGBV in the Zimbabwean hospitality sector. The feminist political economy of labor exposes the systemic roots of vulnerability in precarious work, while intersectionality clarifies how diverse social identities shape individual experiences of TFGBV. Organizational behavior and workplace violence frameworks provide practical tools to analyze specific incidents and design effective responses at the organizational level. As such, the research can move beyond merely describing incidents of TFGBV to analyzing the structural causes, manifestations, and impacts on employed women, thereby informing more effective policy and intervention strategies.

METHODS

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach that combined survey research with document and policy analysis. Primary data was collected through a Google Form survey distributed to 100 women employed in the hospitality industry in Hwange and Victoria Falls. These cities were purposively selected due to their prominence as tourism hubs and the high concentration of women working in the hospitality industry. The survey included both closed- and open-ended questions, aligned with the research objectives, focusing on the forms and patterns of TFGBV, its impact on women's well-being and work performance, and perceptions of workplace and legal responses. Responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality and reduce the risk of re-traumatization.

Secondary data consisted of workplace policies, organizational codes of conduct, and relevant national legal frameworks governing GBV and workplace rights. All data were analyzed thematically: survey responses were coded to identify recurring patterns and themes, while policy documents were examined in relation to international standards on workplace protection.

FINDINGS

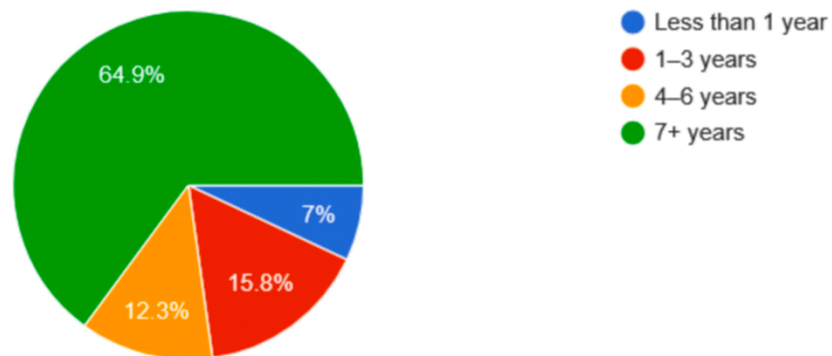
The findings from the survey on TFGBV in the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe provide insights into the experiences of women working in this industry. This section elaborates on these findings, drawn from 57 respondents from the Hwange and Victoria Falls areas, and is structured according to the research questions. Both qualitative and quantitative data are incorporated where appropriate to enrich the analysis.

Table 1. Age range and job description of respondents

Age * Job description Crosstabulation

Count		Job description					Total
		Front office staff	Administrative staff	Managerial staff	Waitress	Housekeeping staff	
Age	18-24	5	0	0	0	0	5
	25-34	10	8	0	0	0	18
	35-44	0	2	0	10	13	25
	45+	0	0	7	0	2	9
Total		15	10	7	10	15	57

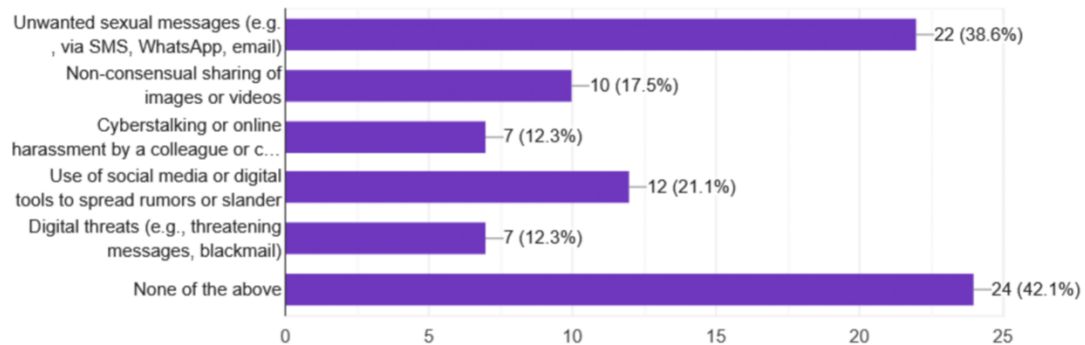
Figure 1. Length of service in the hospitality industry



Thirty-seven respondents have worked in the industry for more than 7 years, which is reflective of a fairly long tenure and offers an informed basis for assessing the TFGBV issues under consideration.

Forms and patterns of TFGBV

Figure 2. Forms of TFGBV



The survey data indicate a notable prevalence of various forms of TFGBV among women working in the tourism and hospitality sector in Zimbabwe, aligning with those discussed in the literature (see Bailey et al., 2021). Out of 57 respondents, 39 reported experiencing at least one form of TFGBV. The most frequently reported forms highlight the various digital avenues through which such violence manifests.

Unwanted sexual messages, sent through platforms such as SMS, WhatsApp, and email, emerged as the most common form of TFGBV. For instance, one administrative staff respondent aged 25-34, with over seven years of experience, reported experiencing unwanted sexual messages, alongside non-consensual sharing of images or videos, the use of social media to spread rumors, and digital threats. Another respondent, a waitress aged 35-44 with over seven years of experience, also reported receiving unwanted sexual messages, suggesting that direct digital communication channels are frequently exploited for harassment.

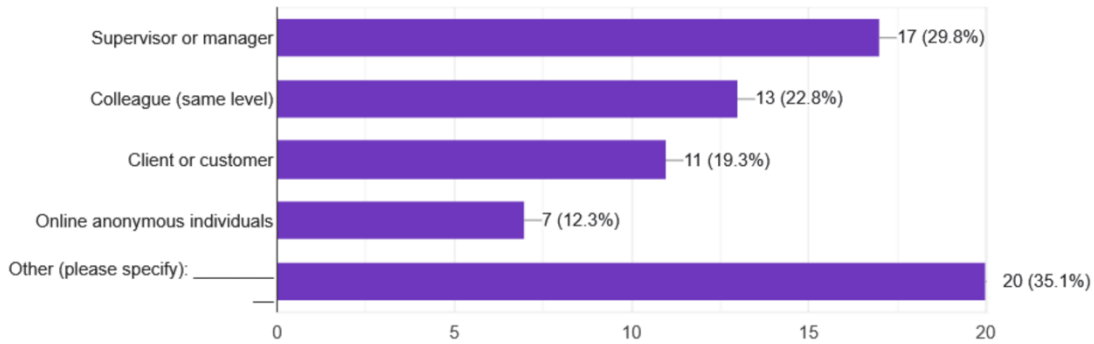
The use of social media or other digital tools to spread rumors or slander was also widely reported. The ease with which information, whether factual or false, can be disseminated online makes this a potent tool for character assassination and reputational damage within the workplace and beyond. Non-consensual sharing of images or videos, a deeply invasive form of TFGBV, was reported by several respondents. A respondent in the "Other staff" category, aged 35-44 with over seven years of experience, specifically mentioned experiencing this form of abuse. Another housekeeping staff member aged 45 and above, also with over seven years of experience, reported both non-consensual sharing and cyberstalking. These incidents highlight a breach of privacy and trust, often leading to significant distress for the victims.

Cyberstalking or online harassment by a colleague or client, involving persistent and unwanted online contact or monitoring, was also noted. An administrative staff member aged 45 and above with over seven years of experience reported experiencing cyberstalking in addition to non-consensual sharing of images or videos. This form of TFGBV can create a constant sense of unease and fear, blurring boundaries between professional and personal life. Digital threats, such as threatening messages or blackmail, were less frequently reported than unwanted sexual messages but remain a serious concern. A front office staff member aged 45 and above with over seven years of experience reported receiving digital threats. These incidents can induce significant fear and psychological distress, potentially impacting job performance and personal safety.

The data reveals a triangulated picture regarding the identity of perpetrators, indicating that TFGBV is not confined to external actors but can also originate from within the workplace environment. Supervisors and managers were identified as perpetrators by a significant number of respondents. This is particularly concerning, as it indicates a global pattern (see Ali et al., 2024 & van der Griend & Hilfinger, 2014) and signals an abuse of power, where individuals in authority use digital platforms to harass or intimidate subordinates. The fear of retaliation or job loss often prevents victims from reporting incidents

involving their superiors, as widely noted in the literature (see La Lopa & Gong, 2020, and Mensah, 2019).

Figure 3. Perpetrators of TFGBV

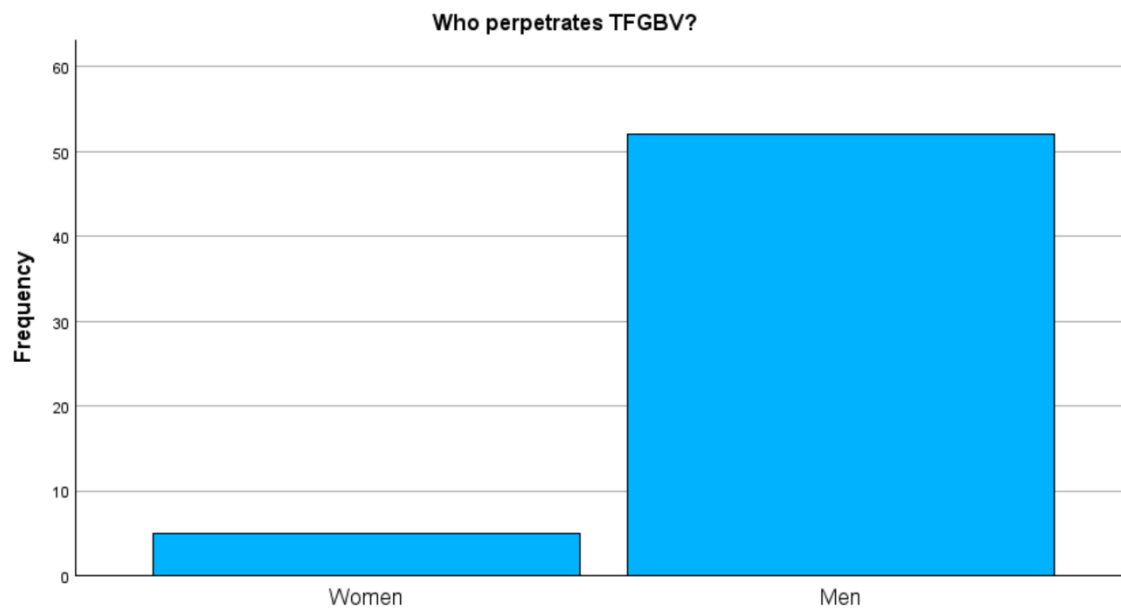


Colleagues were also frequently cited as perpetrators, suggesting that internal workplace relationships may be sources of TFGBV, potentially stemming from personal conflicts, jealousy, or a lack of awareness about appropriate digital conduct. Given the service-oriented nature of the hospitality sector, clients and customers also emerged as perpetrators, highlighting the vulnerability of hospitality workers to harassment from external parties who may feel entitled to engage in inappropriate behavior through digital channels. Some instances of TFGBV were attributed to anonymous online individuals, making it challenging for victims to identify and address the source of harassment. Such anonymity can embolden perpetrators and make victims feel more helpless.

Figure 4. Frequency of TFGBV



Figure 5. Who perpetrates TFGBV?



The frequency of TFGBV experiences varied among respondents. This variation highlights that, while not universal, TFGBV is a recurring issue for a significant segment of the workforce. Most incidents occurred on personal messaging platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, SMS), which are commonly used for both personal and professional communication and are frequently exploited for TFGBV. Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), with their public or semi-public nature, provide fertile ground for rumor-spreading, slander, and cyberstalking. Even platforms designed for professional communication within organizations, such as internal work messaging systems, are not immune to TFGBV, demonstrating the need for stricter monitoring and better enforcement of digital conduct policies. Email, although seemingly more formal, can also be used to send unwanted messages or threats.

Impact of TFGBV on affected women in the workplace

The consequences of TFGBV extend beyond the digital sphere, affecting the psychological, emotional, and professional well-being of affected women in the hospitality sector. The survey data reveal a range of detrimental effects, as shown in the figure below.

Increased stress and anxiety were among the most frequently reported impacts. The constant fear of harassment, uncertainty about who the perpetrator might be, and the emotional toll of managing unwanted digital interactions all contribute to heightened stress and anxiety levels among victims. Many respondents reported experiencing depression or general emotional distress as a result of TFGBV. The feelings of helplessness, shame, anger, and violation can lead to prolonged periods of sadness and a diminished sense of self-worth, the same effects commonly documented in previous research (see Killoren, 2014 & Sharma et al., 2024). The psychological burden of TFGBV often translates into a decline in professional capabilities. Victims may struggle to

concentrate, feel less motivated, and experience reduced productivity due to ongoing emotional strain. In efforts to protect themselves, some women resorted to avoiding digital communication tools essential for their work. This can hinder collaboration, limit communication with clients, and reduce overall job effectiveness, sometimes further potentially isolating them.

Figure 5. Impact of TFGBV

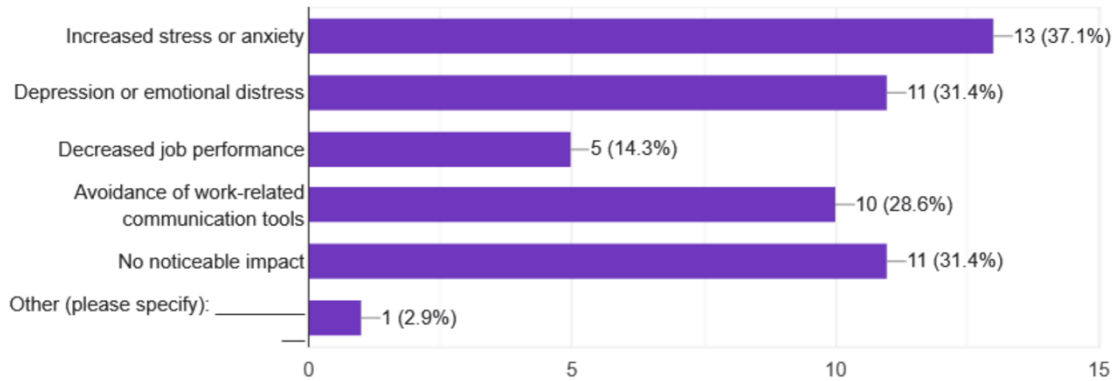
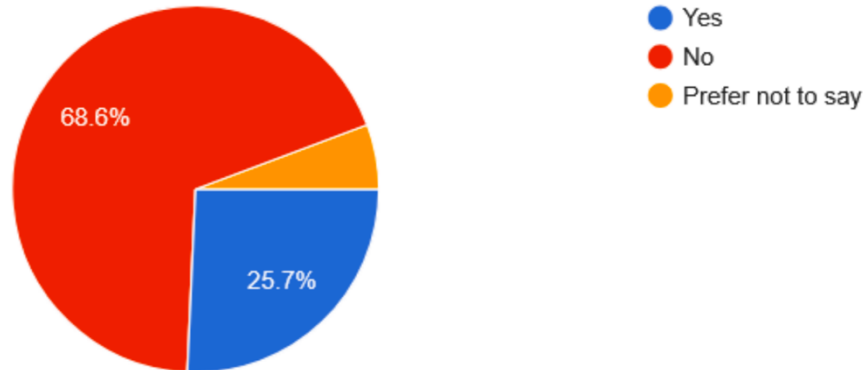


Figure 6. Reporting TFGBV

Did you report the incident(s) of TFGBV to your employer or supervisor?

35 responses



A notable finding is the pervasive fear among victims regarding the reporting of incidents. Many expressed concerns about being blamed for the harassment, facing retaliation from perpetrators (especially when these individuals were superiors), or even losing their jobs. Such fears contribute to a culture of silence, allowing TFGBV to persist unchecked. The perception that reporting would be ineffective or that management would not provide adequate support contributed to a loss of trust, eroding confidence in internal mechanisms designed to protect employees and address grievances.

When asked why they did not report, some respondents stated:

The manager always gets the upper hand.

Fear of retribution.

Fear of retaliation, fear of losing the job.

I thought it would end.

The perpetrator was related to the boss.

Because no action was going to be taken against the perpetrator

Fear of victimization and also fear of drawing a lot of attention to myself.

The person is the head of the hotel and insists that no one will ever stop him from making decision he wants to do, can either terminate or relocate.

A critical pattern observed in the data is the low rate of reporting TFGBV incidents. Despite experiencing harassment, many women chose not to report, primarily due to the aforementioned fears and a lack of faith in the system. Reasons for not reporting include fear of victimization or blame, where victims often internalized the blame or fear of being seen as problematic if they had reported. Fear of retaliation, especially when the perpetrator was a supervisor or colleague, presented a major deterrent due to the risk of professional repercussions. In a competitive job market, the threat of losing employment can silence victims, leading to fear of job loss. A belief that reporting would be ineffective, stemming from a lack of confidence in the organization's ability or willingness to address TFGBV effectively, discouraged reporting. Additionally, some respondents may not have been aware of or trusted the available reporting mechanisms, suggesting a lack of clear reporting channels.

Awareness and effectiveness of existing workplace policies

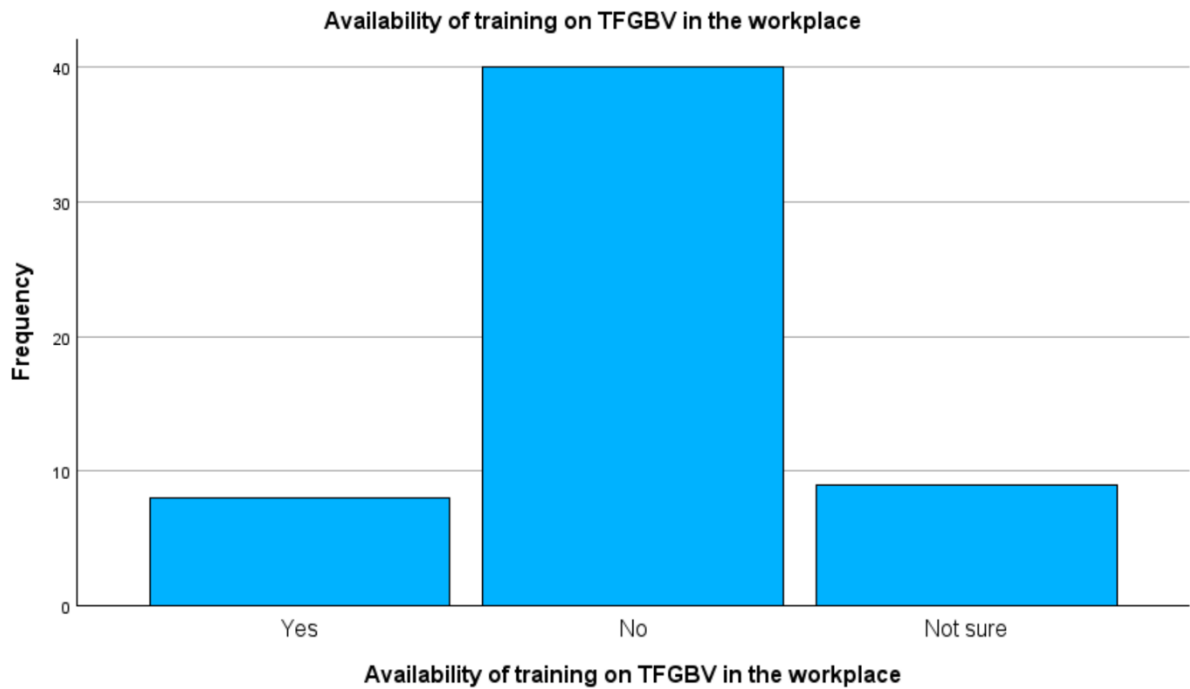
The survey data indicate gaps between the existence of policies and their perceived effectiveness and implementation in addressing TFGBV within the Zimbabwean hospitality sector. Awareness of existing workplace policies on TFGBV was inconsistent among respondents. While some were aware of such policies, a notable portion either had no knowledge of them or were unsure, suggesting that even if policies exist, their communication and dissemination are often inadequate. Some respondents indicated that their workplaces lacked specific policies addressing TFGBV, instead relying on general anti-harassment policies that may not adequately cover the distinctions of digital violence.

Table 2. Awareness of policies that address TFGBV

Are you aware of any policies that address TFGBV?		
	N	%
Yes	13	22.8%
No	33	57.9%
Not sure	11	19.3%

The availability of training on TFGBV was also found to be limited, with many respondents reporting that they had not received any specific training on how to identify, prevent, or report TFGBV.

Figure 7. Availability of training on TFGBV in the workplace



Even where training was provided, its effectiveness was often questioned. Training that is generic, infrequent, or not tailored to the specific challenges of TFGBV may not equip employees with the necessary knowledge and tools. A significant number of respondents rated the effectiveness of current policies in protecting workers from TFGBV as "somewhat effective" or "not effective."

This assessment highlights a disconnect between policy intent and practical outcomes. Reasons for perceived ineffectiveness include a lack of enforcement, as policies, even if well-intentioned, are ineffective without consistent and rigorous enforcement. Insufficient disciplinary action against perpetrators may lead to a perception that policies are not taken seriously. Ambiguous or inaccessible reporting channels deter victims from coming forward, indicating a lack of clear reporting mechanisms. Additionally, victims often feel unsupported by their employers or HR, even after reporting, highlighting the absence of adequate support systems.

Respondents offered valuable suggestions for improving the effectiveness of policies and frameworks. There was a strong call for the development and implementation of explicit policies specifically addressing TFGBV, outlining definitions, prohibited behaviors, reporting procedures, and disciplinary actions. Regular campaigns and communication efforts were highlighted as necessary to ensure that employees are aware of TFGBV, its forms, impact, and available support, thus increasing awareness and education. Training should be mandatory, comprehensive, and tailored to the digital landscape, equipping

employees and management with the skills to prevent, identify, and respond to TFGBV. This is what some of the respondents had to say:

That perpetrators should be dealt with regardless of the positions and relationship to the employer.

A lot of policies in the workplace mostly talk about Gender Based violence in general. More education and awareness should be done on TFGBV.

Frequent trainings.

Follow-ups and actually dealing with the perpetrators.

*Ensuring that they make policy, and that policy is upheld
more trainings.*

Use communication channels to ensure employee safety.

Educating women on harassment.

Holding meetings on a regular basis with clients so as to address such issues.

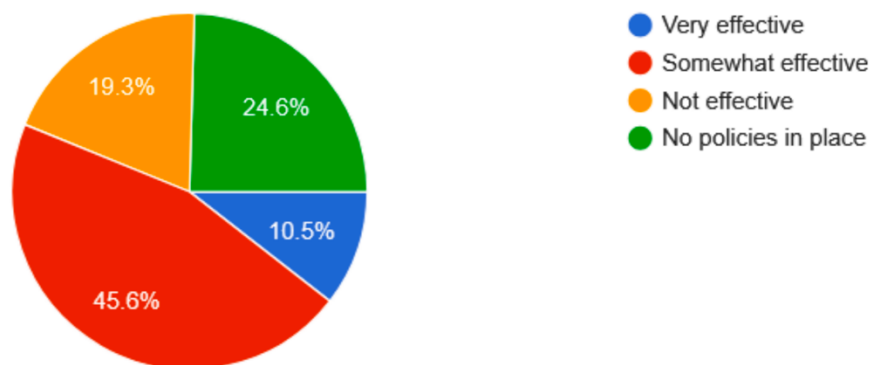
Establish a confidential reporting system to ensure that employees feel safe reporting incidents.

If only we can be heard

Figure 8. Effectiveness of TFGBV training

In your opinion, how effective are the current policies in protecting workers from TFGBV?

57 responses



Establishing safe, confidential, and accessible reporting channels is crucial to encourage victims to come forward without fear of reprisal. There is a need to create an atmosphere where all reported incidents will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action must be seen to be taken against perpetrators to demonstrate a commitment to a zero-tolerance approach, ensuring that serious incidents receive thorough investigation and prompt action. Finally, employers should offer robust support systems for

victims, including counselling, legal assistance, and measures to ensure their safety and well-being.

Discussion

This paper provides insights into the pervasive and multifaceted nature of TFGBV experienced by women working in Zimbabwe's hospitality sector. The observed prevalence of various TFGBV forms, particularly unwanted sexual messages and the use of social media for rumor-spreading, demonstrates a vulnerability within the hospitality industry. This is not merely an extension of traditional workplace harassment into the digital sphere; rather, it signifies how the industry's increasing reliance on ICTs for operations and customer engagement, while enhancing efficiency, simultaneously creates new avenues for digital abuse. This aligns with the feminist political economy of labor framework (See Reyes & Sutton, 2021), which posits that TFGBV is not an isolated act, but a systemic issue rooted in the political and economic structures that perpetuate gender inequality in the workplace. In this context, the digital realm becomes another arena where existing power imbalances are exploited, rather than a neutral space. The "feminization of care work" prevalent in hospitality, where women are often in roles demanding attentiveness and emotional labor, inadvertently exposes them to increased risks of violence (see Gibbs et al., 2021; Waudby & Poulston, 2017, and Ysegnal, 2023), including technology-facilitated forms, as highlighted in the literature review.

The identification of supervisors, managers, colleagues, and clients as perpetrators is particularly significant. The involvement of those in positions of authority (supervisors/managers) and internal colleagues points to an abuse of power within the workplace, where male individuals leverage their status or proximity to harass or abuse subordinates and peers digitally. This resonates strongly with existing literature on workplace power imbalances and harassment (Vizcaino et al., 2020; Hadjisolomou et al., 2023), suggesting that TFGBV is often an extension of pre-existing hierarchical and social inequalities. The inclusion of clients/customers as perpetrators further highlights the unique vulnerabilities of hospitality workers, who are often expected to maintain a professional demeanor even when facing harassment, blurring the lines between professional interaction and personal violation.

The impact of TFGBV on affected women, including increased stress, anxiety, depression, decreased job performance, and the avoidance of work-related communication tools, is consistent with broader research on the psychological and professional consequences of gender-based violence (See Blindow et al., 2024, and Iroegbu, 2024). The psychological burden often translates into a decline in professional capabilities, with victims finding it difficult to concentrate, feeling less motivated, and experiencing reduced productivity due to the emotional toll. The avoidance of essential digital communication tools is a particularly salient finding, indicating that TFGBV also disrupts professional communication and potentially productivity within the sector, creating a tangible negative feedback loop for both employees and organizations. These findings reinforce the understanding that TFGBV has tangible, detrimental effects on both individual well-being and organizational functioning.

A critical finding is the pervasive fear among victims regarding reporting incidents, driven by concerns about blame, retaliation (especially from superiors), or job loss. This fear creates a culture of silence, allowing TFGBV to persist unchecked and eroding confidence in internal mechanisms designed to protect employees and address grievances. This directly challenges the effectiveness of existing workplace policies and legal frameworks, suggesting that even where policies exist, their implementation and enforcement are perceived as inadequate or unsafe. This aligns with the organizational behavior and workplace violence frameworks, which emphasize that a lack of trust in reporting mechanisms and perceived impunity for perpetrators are significant barriers to addressing workplace harassment effectively (See Asamani, 2016; and Lim et al., 2022). The reluctance to report suggests that current policies are either insufficient in their scope, poorly communicated, or inadequately enforced, failing to provide a safe and supportive environment for victims.

The study's findings highlight the need for context-specific policy reforms within the Zimbabwean hospitality sector, which we believe will also be applicable across many other sectors or industries in the country. Policies must explicitly define TFGBV, outline clear reporting procedures that protect victims from retaliation, and ensure swift, impartial investigations. Comprehensive anti-harassment policies that specifically address digital forms of violence and extend protection to employees from all perpetrators, including supervisors, colleagues, and clients, are overdue. Also, policies should mandate regular training for all staff, including management, on TFGBV awareness, prevention, and response, with an emphasis on bystander intervention.

Organizations within the hospitality sector have to move beyond mere policy formulation to active implementation and encourage a supportive workplace culture. This includes establishing confidential and accessible reporting channels, such as anonymous hotlines or designated, trusted personnel. Employers have to invest in digital literacy and safety training for employees, which equips them with strategies to protect themselves online and recognize TFGBV. Creating a culture of zero tolerance for TFGBV, where perpetrators are held accountable regardless of their position, is paramount. Support services, including psychological counselling and legal aid referrals, have to be made available to victims.

Future research could investigate the long-term effects of TFGBV on the career progression and economic stability of women in the hospitality sector. Comparative studies across different industries and regions within Zimbabwe could provide further insights into contextual variations. Additionally, research focusing on the effectiveness of specific interventions and policy implementations in mitigating TFGBV would be valuable. Qualitative studies examining the lived experiences of victims and perpetrators can provide deeper insights into the motivations underlying TFGBV.

CONCLUSION

This study provides one of the pioneer empirical studies of TFGBV within Zimbabwe's hospitality sector and demonstrates how the digitalization of work

has extended gendered vulnerabilities into online spaces. The findings demonstrate that unwanted sexual messages, digital slander, and non-consensual sharing of intimate content are pervasive, often normalized, and primarily perpetrated by supervisors, colleagues, and clients. These experiences inflict psychological and professional harm, including stress, anxiety, and withdrawal from digital communication tools that are essential for career advancement.

The research also reveals that TFGBV is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a manifestation of deeper structural inequalities in the hospitality industry, an occupational space already shaped by gendered hierarchies and economic precarity. Viewed through a feminist political economy and intersectional lens, the study shows how technology acts as both an enabler and amplifier of patriarchal power, transforming pre-existing offline vulnerabilities into new digital forms of surveillance, control, and harassment. Women's underreporting of TFGBV, driven by fear of retaliation, stigma, and institutional inaction, highlights the inadequacy of workplace protection systems and the absence of survivor-centered support.

Policy and document reviews further reveal that current labor laws and workplace frameworks in Zimbabwe remain ill-equipped to address TFGBV. They lack specificity, enforceable standards, and digital safety provisions aligned with emerging international norms such as ILO Convention No. 190. As such, addressing TFGBV demands an integrated approach that recognizes it simultaneously as a gender equality, labor, and digital rights issue. Employers, policymakers, and regulators are encouraged to adopt comprehensive, gender-responsive, and technology-aware interventions to ensure safe, dignified, and inclusive workplaces for women in the hospitality industry and beyond.

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ABOUT

SALASIKA etymologically derived from Javanese language meaning 'brave woman'. SALASIKA JOURNAL (SJ) is founded in July 2019 as an international open access, scholarly, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal publishing theoretically innovative and methodologically diverse research in the fields of gender studies, sexualities and feminism. Our conception of both theory and method is broad and encompassing, and we welcome contributions from scholars around the world.

SJ is inspired by the need to put into visibility the Indonesian and South East Asian women to ensure a dissemination of knowledge to a wider general audience.

SJ selects at least several outstanding articles by scholars in the early stages of a career in academic research for each issue, thereby providing support for new voices and emerging scholarship.

AUDIENCE

SJ aims to provide academic literature which is accessible across disciplines, but also to a wider 'non-academic' audience interested and engaged with social justice, ecofeminism, human rights, policy/advocacy, gender, sexualities, concepts of equality, social change, migration and social mobilisation, inter-religious and international relations and development.

There are other journals which address those topics, but SJ approaches the broad areas of gender, sexuality and feminism in an integrated fashion. It further addresses the issue of international collaboration and inclusion as existing gaps in the area of academic publishing by (a) crossing language boundaries and creating a space for publishing and (b) providing an opportunity for innovative emerging scholars to engage in the academic dialogue with established researchers.

STRUCTURE OF THE JOURNAL

All articles will be preceded by an abstract (150-200 words), keywords, main text introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion; acknowledgments; declaration of interest statement; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figures; figure captions (as a list); and a contributor biography (150 words). Word length is 4,000-10,000 words, including all previous elements.

TIMELINE AND SCHEDULE

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