



Masculinity and women's economic contribution to household : between social representations and survival imperatives in Ouagadougou

*Masculinité et apport économique des femmes dans les ménages : entre représentations
sociales et impératifs de survie à Ouagadougou*

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Abstract : The analysis of gender relations in household management takes into account the determinants and the way in which resources are produced and distributed within a household. In social relations of sex in households, money is a factor of emancipation that confers power and can serve as a lever for the emancipation of women. From this perspective, the persistence of male domination can be explained by women's economic dependence within the household. A comprehensive approach was adopted for the operationalization of this research. It consisted of in-depth interviews. For the conduct of the interviews, interview guides have been developed. The participants in the interview were accidentally recruited from neighbourhoods in the city of Ouagadougou. The sample was constituted by saturation within each type of target (male and female) and 151 people were interviewed. The results reveal various factors explaining the man's relationship to his wife's financial contributions. Social representations of masculinity perceive the homes supported by women's financial and economic contributions as places of misfortune of male authority. They inscribe the financial power of men as a prerequisite for male authority. On the other hand, economic constraints associated with modern household management appear to undermine masculinity by forcing men to accept their wives' financial contributions. The results also show that some women make significant financial contributions, but these contributions must remain invisible to preserve masculinity.

Keywords : Masculinity, Social representations, Household contribution, Ouagadougou.

Résumé : L'analyse des relations entre les sexes dans la gestion des ménages tient compte des déterminants et de la manière dont les ressources sont produites et distribuées au sein d'un ménage. Dans les relations sociales entre les sexes au sein des ménages, l'argent est un facteur d'émancipation qui confère du pouvoir et peut servir de levier pour l'émancipation des femmes. Dans cette perspective, la persistance de la domination masculine peut s'expliquer par la dépendance économique des femmes au sein du ménage. Une approche globale a été adoptée pour la mise en œuvre de cette recherche. Elle a consisté en des entretiens approfondis. Pour la conduite des entretiens, des guides d'entretien ont été élaborés. Les participants aux entretiens ont été recrutés de manière accidentelle dans les quartiers de la ville de Ouagadougou. L'échantillon a été constitué par saturation au sein de chaque type de cible (hommes et femmes) et 151 personnes ont été interrogées. Les résultats révèlent divers facteurs expliquant la relation de l'homme avec les contributions financières de sa femme. Les représentations sociales de la masculinité perçoivent les foyers soutenus par les contributions financières et économiques des femmes comme des lieux de malheur pour l'autorité masculine. Ils inscrivent le pouvoir financier des hommes comme condition préalable à l'autorité masculine. D'autre part, les contraintes économiques liées à la gestion moderne du ménage semblent nuire à la masculinité en obligeant les hommes à accepter les contributions

financières de leurs épouses. Les résultats montrent également que certaines femmes apportent des contributions financières importantes, mais que celles-ci doivent rester invisibles afin de préserver la masculinité.

Mots clé : Masculinité, Représentations sociales, Contribution au ménage, Ouagadougou.

Introduction

Masculinity goes beyond simplistic interpretations and holds a significant sociological meaning constructed within gender relations. As a sociological concept of gender, it reflects both the symbolism of virility (Maizi, 1988, p. 45) and the perception of male superiority over women. The demands of masculinity position men not as autonomous individuals, but as social actors whose behaviors are shaped by socially imposed norms (Chaouche, 2018, p.15). As a result, men no longer act solely according to individual rationality, but rather in conformity with social constraints that define masculine principles. These constraints operate as inviolable norms intended to prevent any risk of effeminacy.

The notion of a "crisis of masculinity" refers to actions that are perceived as undermining male authority (Dupuis-Déri, 2018, p.14). According to this notion, "real men should not be sensitive, change diapers, or concern themselves with women's sexual pleasure" (Dupuis-Déri, 2018, p. 14). However, the idea of a masculine crisis has also been questioned. "The theme of the crisis of masculinity sells and manufactures an audience. Is the breakdown of masculinity a real phenomenon or a purely ideological construct?" (Molinier, 2004, p. 24). This question remains relevant, given the persistence of gender inequalities in employment access, wage disparities, and professional opportunities. In this context, the crisis of masculinity is often associated with the perceived loss of male privileges. Since masculinity is not automatically conferred at birth, "such an injunction is sufficient to define masculine identity as a conquest of the self by the subject" (Molinier, 2004, p. 24).

The construction of a masculine identity is closely linked to control over resources. According to Ratele (2020, p. 2-3), masculinity is not an innate trait and is not unchangeable; it is a social construct that can evolve with time and circumstances. According to this author, masculinity is a position in gender relations defined by social practices, structural roles, and tangible outcomes. In this text, the concept of masculinity is defined by a man's ability to access and manage the resources in his household. He is the primary provider (De Singly, 2004, p.86). However, women also play a role in acquiring the resources necessary for household survival, which creates tension between the need to build family capital and masculinity. The empowerment of women through paid work gives them access to spaces of freedom (Badini Kinda, 2010, p. 29) and enables them to break free from marital control. In a study on migration and work among Haitian women, Joseph (2010, p.102) establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between paid work and autonomy from husbands. Similarly, "any monetary income, however modest, is a sign of independence, not only from the husband but also from the mother" (Maizi, 1988, p. 10).

Paid work, whether motivated by economic independence or personal fulfillment, requires interaction within the couple and changes marital relationships. Ultimately, it improves "the couple's position in the hierarchy of social levels and lifestyles" (De Singly, 2004, p. 86). Paid work by women may not only contribute to strengthening household resources and well-being, but also redefines the basis of marital relationships, making emotional attachment the main reason for staying together.

Furthermore, economic and financial independence empowers women. It allows them to decide whether or not to remain in a relationship (De Singly, 1993, p. 90) and promotes their social solvency through social recognition and appreciation (Nagel, 1992, p.14). Men are not insensitive to the benefits of women's economic empowerment. Even though they may be aware of the advantages of this empowerment, it is clear that many of them do not actively support their wives. They believe that women's economic power emancipates them from marital control (SIGI, 2018, p.87). Indeed, women's financial empowerment can destabilize

marital relationships when their contributions rival those of their husbands (Nikina, et al., 2012, p. 49).

Household management requires daily decisions about consumption. These management practices are guided by social representations. The gender division that is part of these representations defines the responsibilities and roles of men and women in the context of household management. In Burkina Faso, three areas are considered inclusive for women: visits to relatives, personal care, and major purchases. However, this inclusion is not systematic, as only a small proportion of women (just over 10%) participate in these areas, depending on the culture (Gnomou-Thiombiano, 2014, p. 257). In the context of financial decision-making, studies reveal that women are even more excluded when it comes to their own income (SIGI, 2018, p.75). In addition to financial power, education is presented as a no less important factor in women's empowerment. The level of education is correlated with inclusion in decision-making, according to Dumont (2014, p. 68). It believes that women with a level of education, even if one considers the level of primary education, are more involved in decision-making in their households. It thus emerges that factors such as the level of education, urbanization and women's economic empowerment are potential inclusive determinants of decision-making within households (Gnomou & Thiombiano, 2014, p. 270). Contrary to the idea that women do not participate in decisions concerning their income, available data indicate that the majority of women who engage in income-generating activities enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. Nine out of ten of these women decide independently how to use their income (Gnomou-Thiombiano, 2014, p. 263). In Ouagadougou, a man's financial status is a key indicator of his masculinity. The ability to provide for one's family without relying on one's wife's contributions is highly valued. Conversely, a woman's significant participation in her household's economy is considered a sign of weakness, and her husband is labelled a *ninyalga* (a derogatory term meaning 'worthless, insignificant person'). While the urban discourse on gender equality predominantly promotes women's economic and financial inclusion in managing household expenses, empirical observations in Ouagadougou reveal relative tolerance of a wife dominating her husband financially. A man who is financially dominated appears to lack masculinity, a trait that is socially devalued. While previous studies have highlighted women's growing involvement in household management, they have not analysed the implications of the perception that women's economic power threatens masculinity. Furthermore, these studies do not permit an analysis of the socially established link between women's financial superiority and the erosion of male dominance. How, then, do social representations of masculinity shape men's attitudes towards women's contributions to household economic management ? This research aims to examine the social constructs surrounding women's financial participation in household management. This research is structured around four main points. The methodology, the results, the discussion, and the conclusion.

1. Methodology

The survey was conducted in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. Ouagadougou was chosen for its cultural diversity and the coexistence of multiple social groups that are in constant interaction with one another. These groups have different social perceptions of reality. Although the city is geographically spread out, it was considered a single research area and treated as a single case in this study. Data collection was carried out in several neighborhoods of the city. Figure 1 shows a map of the areas where fieldwork was conducted.

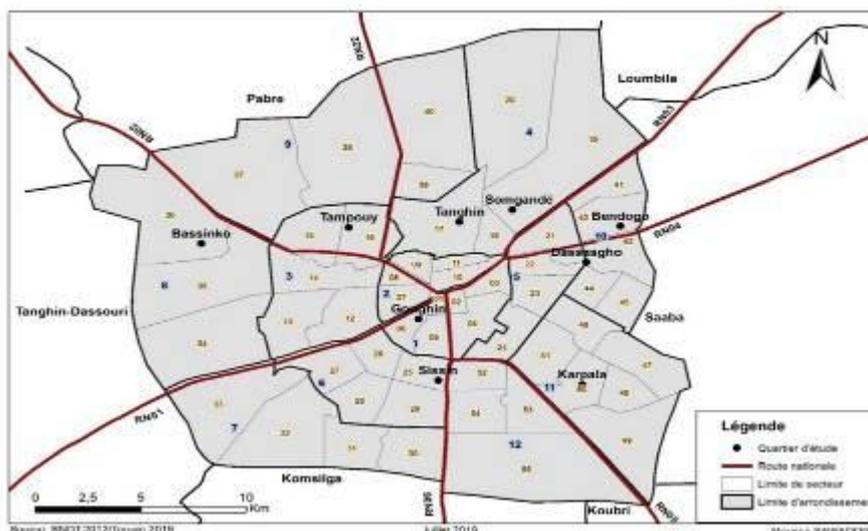


Figure 1: location of the research area (Source: field survey data).

This research takes a comprehensive epistemological approach. The choice of qualitative methodology is justified by the objective of the study. This approach requires deep immersion in the discourse produced by social actors. Interviews were conducted using an interview guide. To triangulate informants, we interviewed participants from various religious denominations, social groups, and administrative and judicial structures responsible for family issues.

After reaching intra-type saturation among informants, a total sample consisted of 151 participants. The sample was constituted by 87 Women and 64 men Interviews were conducted mainly in French and in the local language, Mooré. Participants were recruited according to the principles of accidental sampling after a daily random draw of study areas. Each day of the survey, we drew lots without replacement to determine the neighborhood where we would conduct the interviews. Once the draw was made, we decided to visit a household and interview either the man or his wife. In the spirit of a “do no harm” survey, we chose not to interview couples. The social awkwardness of the question can cause desirability bias, and to reduce the influence of gender relations on the interview, we felt it was appropriate to remain completely confidential. When we interview a man in the first home, we interview a woman in the second, and vice versa. This sampling method was chosen to diversify the informants by social group. Women who wished to participate in the interview but felt uncomfortable discussing the subject inside their home were given the opportunity to choose a place and time that suited them for the interview. Throughout the data collection process, we obtained the verbal consent of the interviewees.

The collected data were transcribed, and the corpus was segmented into themes to identify thematic consistency between the interviews. Thematic analysis focused on the social representations expressed by the interviewees based on key elements of their discourse (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1995, p. 213). This research is based on social representations theory, which serves as its theoretical foundation. Social representations refer to shared systems of meaning within social group. They delineate individual and collective identity (Jodelet, 1997, p. 53). They are intrinsic to individuals and construct their patterns of thought and perception (Durkheim, 1898). Drawing inspiration from the phenomenon of objectification, we see how social reality is organized into different levels of social representations (Boggi & Iannaccone, 1993, p.104). Masculinity, grappling with women's financial and material contributions, becomes distorted and reconstructed so that it can be appropriated by individuals. They define masculinity in a marital context characterized by the wife's significant contributions. As a

result, in the structural approach to social representations, masculinity occupies the role of a central core (Abric, 1994, p. 21). This core is surrounded by explanatory variables, including the financial power and the importance of women's contributions. These variables help explain masculinity in the context of Ouagadougou. After identifying the geographical area, techniques, and data collection tools, it was important to outline the theoretical framework of this research. The following section presents the results.

2. Results

The results of this research are organized around the following main themes: the different social conceptions of household care; the objectification of male impotence under economic constraints; the factors explaining men's reluctance to accept their wives' financial contributions; the gendered dynamics of giving and receiving within couples in Ouagadougou, economic power as an instrument of male domination, gender and the administration of household expenditures.

2.1. The different social conceptions of household provision

In accordance with Islamic teachings, Muslim interviewees often pointed out that wives are free to contribute to or not contribute to household maintenance, according to their religion. However, this does not mean that men reject financial assistance from their wives. As K.S., a 39-year-old father of two, explains: "She is not obligated to help me, but if she wants to, she can." Therefore, a woman's wealth does not excuse her husband from fulfilling his responsibilities. Even if she is wealthy, her husband is still obligated to provide for the family's daily needs. Thus, it would generally be perceived as inappropriate for a man to redistribute family roles based on his wife's income. As D.I., a 40-year-old computer scientist and father of two, puts it: "All of a woman's expenses are the responsibility of her husband, even if she is wealthy. A wife's financial wealth should not be used as an excuse for her husband to shirk his responsibilities. Even if he is poor and his wife is successful in business, he may accept her assistance—but he cannot demand it—unless she freely decides to help him."

Similarly, O.M., a 42-year-old sociologist and father of three, states: "A woman can help her husband, but it is not an obligation. It is obligatory for the husband to assist his wife because he is the one who married her. However, she has no duty to contribute to household expenses." Thus, when a woman contributes financially or materially to family management—a role traditionally reserved for men—her participation can indirectly reveal her husband's inability to fulfill his responsibilities. Yet, economic and social constraints often make it difficult for men to meet all financial needs alone.

2.2. The objectification of men's economic limitations

Social norms designate women as "homemakers." Consequently, when women enter the labor market, they are often perceived as leaving their traditional assigned sphere. This creates tensions: for men, women's economic participation represents both a benefit to the household and a challenge to masculinity. Faced with the reality of financial hardship, many men experience cognitive dissonance: they are torn between respecting traditional norms and the practical necessity of accepting their wives' paid employment. As S.R. (43, economic advisor, father of two) points out: "Everyone in Burkina Faso recognizes that salaries are no longer enough. A single income for a household is catastrophic. So, if a woman can earn a little money regularly, at least for household expenses, she is doing her part and relieving her husband of some of the burden. That's what it's all about." This statement emphasizes that men often accept their wives' economic participation due to their own financial limitations, though this is not always without discomfort. As one respondent in Mooré said, "May God provide for all men so that they do not have to depend on women's wealth! We have no other choice!"

This sentiment illustrates the notion that women's economic participation is often tolerated out of necessity rather than ideological acceptance.

Although religious doctrines, particularly Islamic ones, stipulate that women are not required to contribute financially, many men must navigate between religious ideals and pragmatic social realities. As K.S. (39) confides: "If I strictly applied religion, I would have to forbid her from working. But we invested in her career together, so it would be absurd for me to prevent her from doing so."

Similarly, O.A. (36 years old, father of one) notes: "There is religion, but there is also reality! With my meager salary, I can't tell my wife, 'You are free to do what you want with your salary.' Religion doesn't forbid accepting help—it just discourages forcing it." Imam Z.A. confirms: "It is not haram. Religion does not forbid a man to accept financial help from his wife, as long as it is voluntary." In some cases, men even attempt to reconcile religious principles with economic necessity, adapting their interpretation to their circumstances. Moreover, women who were already engaged in income-generating activities before marriage were more likely to continue working afterward. As O.B. (34 years old, trader) explains: "I didn't have the chance to go to school. So, I started trading when I was seven years old. My husband initially didn't want me to continue, but I insisted—I can't just sit around doing nothing."

Similarly, Z.A., a 27-year-old shopkeeper, says: "My husband and I met in the business world. When we got married, he couldn't stop me from working because he couldn't afford to support me financially." In reality, there is no social aversion to couples in which the woman has financial power. The thorny issue of masculinity is the difference in financial resources between men and women. Masculinity is put on hold when this difference competes with or favors the wife's resources. What women perceive as a justification for their husbands' adherence to this model actually leads to an imbalance in the relationship due to social representations that portray this impotence as a weakness of masculinity. This state of affairs helps explain why many men still seek to preserve their symbolic power by minimizing their wives' contributions. This raises the following question: what are the underlying factors that make men uncomfortable with women's economic participation in the home ?

2.3. Factors explaining men's reluctance to accept their wives' income

The discomfort associated with officially accepting or publicly acknowledging women's contribution to family well-being is often attributed to women's attitudes. Most respondents, including women themselves, mentioned that women do not always keep financial matters confidential. All agree that when a man accepts money from his wife, she may publicize it. Several comments illustrate this view: "If you accept money from a woman, she may one day create problems for you. She will reveal everything you do with her money. She will reveal everything" (D.S., 48 years old, education advisor, father of two children). Men's reluctance to acknowledge their wives' contributions also stems from the belief that accepting help is linked to a loss of masculinity. Society defines masculinity as a man's ability to provide for his family. Therefore, accepting help from one's wife is perceived by society as a loss of masculinity and honor.

Accepting a wife's help may also lead to social disapproval from peers. Men are generally perceived as dominant and are therefore expected not to display weaknesses that might suggest submission to their wives. According to K.S. (39 years old, father of two children), accepting help from one's wife is not socially encouraged, and conformity to this social norm is essential; otherwise, one risks being labeled deviant. "Sometimes, for no reason, people will say that it is the woman who does this or that and that her husband is not a real man. Everyone wants to look like other men. In some countries, if you are not careful, you will be sidelined. If you act without considering what society says, consultations among men will

take place without you. People will say that with this man, unless he consults his wife, nothing will move forward. In the end, you will be quarantined” (K.S., 39 years old, father of two children). From this perspective, it would be humiliating for a man, considered the head and authority of the family, to allow his wife to take over household management. In the eyes of society, such a man is seen as lazy and submissive, having symbolically ceded his role to his wife. According to S.O. (head of a public structure for the promotion of women in Ouagadougou), the preservation of masculinity is at the heart of this issue. She argues that men do not truly support women’s activities outside the home and are therefore suspicious of women’s contributions, “because men also want women to remain inactive and dependent in order to assert their superiority.” Moreover, when a man assumes total responsibility for household expenses, he gains respect and enhances his image not only in society but also in the eyes of his children. Preserving this image is a key objective. Spouses therefore behave in ways that make the father appear as the primary financial authority within the household. For example, “If we go out with the children, I cannot let them see me giving him money because they may no longer respect their father if he receives money from me. Even in public, you must avoid this and do it at home before going out,” explains Y.N. (43 years old, shopkeeper, mother of four children). In this sense, money becomes an instrument for safeguarding authority within the family. When the head of the household is financially dependent, he risks being undervalued. Thus, the redistribution of financial resources in marital relationships is illustrated by its asymmetry. In everyday life, in public, men are reluctant to accept money from their wives for fear of undermining their masculinity. On the other hand, it is honorable for women to display the gifts their husbands give them. According to those interviewed, masculinity is defined by a man's ability to provide for his family. It also extends to his ability to assert his dominance over his wife through his prerogative to control the resources she generates.

Allowing women to contribute financially to household management is perceived as granting them the right to participate in family decision-making. This concern leads S.R. (43 years old, economic affairs advisor, father of two children) to state :

If you give her that opportunity, indecent behavior and impertinence can quickly enter the home. When that happens, it is not good for the family. A household exists primarily for the education of children. When a mother is impertinent toward her husband, what kind of education does that provide? We are not saying that women must be submissive, but there is a minimum level of respect owed to the husband. Some women, after controlling household expenses, become overzealous. When the man speaks, she believes she has the final say. If the last word always belongs to the wife, the man loses his reason for being.

The men interviewed emphasized the negative effects of women's financial empowerment. Their comments reveal a deep fear of losing male authority. As D.S. (48, education advisor, father of two) explains: “If a woman's star shines brighter than her husband's, when you say one, she says two; when you say two, she's already at four.” These comments illustrate the desire to maintain women's economic dependence. For these men, women's contributions should not be a factor in their emancipation from marital control.

2.4. Gender relations and the asymmetrical experience of giving and receiving within couples in Ouagadougou

Man–woman relationships within households are shaped by the exchange of goods and services essential to both family welfare and individual well-being. Individual satisfaction depends on maintaining the marital relationship. However, perceptions of receiving differ between men and women, depending on the nature of the gift. While women often take pride

in displaying what their husbands give them, men feel embarrassed discussing what they receive from their wives. As S.N.I. explains, “It is cultural. In our country, especially in Africa, an African man does not sit among his peers and say that it is his wife who did this or that.”

Similarly, S.A. (37 years old, teacher, mother of two children) considers receiving gifts an honor for women, particularly when they come from their husbands. A husband’s gift symbolizes love, whereas a man cannot publicly acknowledge what his wife gives him. “It is not honorable for a man to expose what his wife has done for him. On the other hand, women are often perceived as most likely to publicize such contributions. They like to provoke jealousy and show that they are loved and have the ideal husband. We promote our husbands. But if a man were to say that his wife did this or that for him, his peers would mock him.” For R.S.C. (43 years old, teacher, mother of three children), publicizing a husband’s gifts is a way of honoring him and expressing love: “That is what is normal. Because we love our husbands, we value them. Whatever you wear in his house, even if he did not buy it, it is attributed to him. When you go out, people say ‘Mrs. so-and-so,’ even if he has nothing. It is the woman who knows what happens at home, but it is to enhance the man’s image.” Women’s social role thus becomes one of honoring their husbands and reinforcing their masculinity by making society believe that the man provides for them.

This reflects the socially constructed superiority of men over women. These dynamics clearly demonstrate gender inequality within households.

Furthermore, married women often take pleasure in remaining in their husbands' shadows because this behavior is socially valued. A submissive wife is favored by her husband. Thus, married women are socialized to believe that their image improves when they do not challenge marital authority and avoid any hint of competition or domination, even when they possess equal or superior skills. As Y.M. (48 years old, trader, father of four children) explains, even significant investments made by wives must be attributed to their husbands: “Even if the wife buys you a car or builds a large building, she must never say that she used her own money. She must say that her husband did it.” Many men therefore accept goods from their wives discreetly. This behavior reflects dominant representations of gender roles in household management. Although attempts to conceal women’s contributions are often futile—since education level, occupation, and family background are visible social indicators—men feel reassured as long as doubt persists and household assets appear gender-neutral. While ambiguity may serve as a temporary shield, social scrutiny remains constant, and one cannot entirely escape its watchful eye.

2.5. Economic power as an instrument of male domination

Overall, men have not fully integrated their wives’ contributions but merely tolerate them. The factors outlined above determine the extent of women’s contributions. All other things being equal, men would prefer not to acknowledge their wives’ involvement. They consider that women’s economic situations may have unintended effects. S.R. (43 years old, economic affairs advisor, father of two children) expresses this resentment as follows:

I have told her many times that if I had the means, even one cent, she would not contribute to the management of the household. The day she thinks she has contributed a lot of money to the household, I remind her that it is because I do not have any. If I did, I would not ask her whether this or that expense had been covered. I never ask whether she has received her salary. I do not even know how many times, in nearly ten years of marriage, I have asked her whether she received her pay. No, I do not care. As long as I can manage household affairs, I do so. And when I cannot, I say that I have no money.

Economic emancipation—or even women’s financial contribution to household management—is perceived as generating perverse effects, particularly insubordination.

Marital relationships are thus interpreted through the lens of financial capacity. Women's actions are often attributed to their economic autonomy. When a woman resists her husband, she is quickly labeled insubordinate. In this way, men present themselves as victims while exercising psychological violence over their wives, since repeatedly describing a woman as insubordinate simply because she has financial resources constitutes an insult. As G.M. (39 years old, teacher, mother of two children) explains: "I can no longer say anything in the house. If I do not share his point of view, he tells me that it is because I have the means that I no longer respect him."

Refusing to accept money from one's wife is a practice experienced by many women in Ouagadougou. Among some men interviewed (including a banker and a trader), wives do not contribute financially to household management. This is not due to a lack of resources, as these women report being well paid, in some cases among the highest earners in Burkina Faso. In both cases, wives are free to work but are not assigned any financial obligations within the household. They may buy gifts for the children, dress themselves, send money to their parents, and use the remainder of their income freely, but they are prohibited from spending it on household expenses.

However, women do not appear to harbor resentment toward their husbands' attitudes. They do not perceive these practices as domination and instead take pride in their husbands' masculinity. This observation supports the statement of S.R. (43 years old, economic affairs advisor, father of two children): "Women like to see household expenses covered by men. Do you know that a woman can have one million francs (1,000,000 F) and still ask her husband—who earns only ten thousand francs (10,000 F) per month—for ten francs (10 F)? This is true; I am not lying. I cannot prove it concretely, but I swear it is true. Try to understand."

This suggests that women do not perceive household management as an instrument of domination wielded by men. Rather, they view it as a sign of their husbands' masculinity and take pride in knowing that "the husband is capable." They have internalized the idea that mobilizing household resources is not their responsibility but that of men who take them as wives. Men's refusal to accept women's contributions thus serves a single purpose: affirming masculinity and extending male supremacy. Indeed, when a woman is economically inactive within the household, she effectively relinquishes any claim to participation in decision-making.

Another dimension of this issue lies in social competition between men. The refusal to accept contributions from wives is not solely rooted in the relationship between men and women or in the desire to maintain dominance over one's spouse; it also responds to an implicit need to signal social status. By making his wife's financial contribution invisible or preventing her from working, the man asserts his financial power. He demonstrates his masculinity to society. While the woman's contribution to running the household gives her the status of partner, her non-contribution legitimizes her husband's dominance. This dynamic leads P.M. (36, tax inspector, father of three) to observe: "When there is a conflict between a husband and wife, and the husband can easily say, 'Pack your bags and leave,' it's because he looks around the house and sees that very little belongs to the wife. I often use the example of a foundation: if your wife had helped build the foundation of the house, you wouldn't ask her to leave so easily." Ultimately, men's fear and discomfort with their wives' contributions stem from a desire to assert their masculinity. Social representations position men as heads of households, and economic power is a central pillar of this concept of masculinity. When this power weakens, men experience a loss of authority, which can lead to a crisis of masculinity.

2.6. Gender and household financial management

Analyzing household expenditure management involves examining how families handle unforeseen events and prioritize expenses in contexts of economic precariousness. While

management practices vary, households generally do little planning of production and consumption activities. Contingencies are managed according to urgency rather than importance. Social events, such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals, are addressed based on the family's social ties to those involved and which spouse has liquidity at the time. Households cannot avoid unexpected events, yet management is often improvised. Resources used to address contingencies are drawn from daily income, particularly among traders, or through debt. As B.A., a 35-year-old trader and father of two, explains: "We don't have money set aside for contingencies. There is no organization because we do not earn enough. When something happens, you use what you have sold or borrow from friends. For ceremonies, everyone contributes." In some families, contingency management is shared. O.R., a 31-year-old father of two, describes this form of co-management, albeit with certain limits: "We manage unexpected expenses together, but I don't get involved when it comes to her friends because she has too many."

Moreover, contingency management is gendered. Some couples do not pool their contributions for social events. Faced with a contingency, the man contributes independently, and the woman does the same. As I.E. (48 years old, shopkeeper, father of four children) notes: "For weddings or baptisms, each person contributes separately because men and women do not express generosity in the same way during such events." Planning difficulties stem largely from insufficient household resources. Expenses exceed income, forcing families to live from day to day without long-term planning. Except for households with regular incomes, most do not operate with formal budgets. When budgets exist, they serve primarily to balance resources and expenses. In the best cases, expenditures match income; in others, expenses exceed resources, leading households into cycles of debt—often triggered by social events. In households with irregular incomes, expenditure decisions reflect the absence of a long-term development plan. Any surplus is managed in an improvised manner. As D.I., a computer scientist and father of two children, explains: "Surplus money is often spent by some men in maquis, drinking and eating, while women and children remain at home. If expenses were prioritized according to importance rather than urgency, families would cover essential needs and save the rest for investment."

Finally, although banking services are increasingly accessible, their use remains uneven, particularly among households in the informal sector. While most interviewees report having bank accounts, those who do not cite insufficient resources as the main reason. This is illustrated by M.K. (38 years old, mother of five children): "I do not have a bank account; my account is my mouth and my children. Since things are difficult at home, I cannot put money in a bank and leave my husband and children hungry—especially since he is ill and stays at home."

In conclusion, the households studied rarely plan or prioritize expenditures. Spending decisions are driven by urgency and resource availability rather than long-term economic rationality. Instead of accumulating capital, households prioritize the preservation of social ties. The absence of economic promotion strategies reflects both internal and external constraints that limit family development.

3. Discussion

The results of this study show that representations establish a relationship between the role of economic provider and male dominance. Men maintain the dignity of their masculinity due to their financial responsibility for their households. This result is consistent with religious principles, particularly Islamic ones, which state that male dominance, a defining characteristic of masculinity, stems from a man providing for his wife. "Men have authority over women (qawwamuna 'ala al-nisa'), in accordance with the expenses they incur to provide for them" (Lydon 2007, p. 296). When a husband is unable to provide for his wife and family, he loses

his status as head of the household (Abderraouf, 2017, p. 296). In exchange for this provision, the woman must submit to him (Arnaldez, 1977, p.136 ; Lydon, 2007 ,p. 295). The theory of social representation explains the power of provision as the attributes of masculinity as the central core of the representation.

Previous research shows that providing for women's material needs is a fundamental male obligation (Abderraouf, 2017, p.64). Therefore, men assume financial and material responsibility for women, who are not required to contribute to acquiring essential goods for the survival of the household. If a man fails to provide food, shelter, or clothing for his wife and family, his wife can divorce him for these reasons (Lydon 2007, p. 295). From the perspective of the Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which draws from Islamic tradition: « A husband is legally responsible for supporting his wife financially. He must provide her with housing, food, clothing, and furniture so that she can maintain the standard of living to which she is accustomed. A woman can take her husband to court if he refuses to support her without a legitimate reason" (Mehranguiz & Homa, 1996, p. 22). This statement helps explain the theoretical criteria of masculinity.

Islam clearly contributes to reinforcing social representations that discourage men from recognizing their wives' contributions. The conclusions drawn from this perspective are consistent. While the resources mobilized by husbands are considered collective household assets, the resources of women remain individualized and excluded from the family collective. By refusing to openly benefit from their wives' resources, men test and affirm their masculinity. This is illustrated in the following statement: "Traditional society has always recognized the ownership of women's personal property. The proceeds from their income-generating activities belong to them entirely and can be used at their discretion. However, a man's assets must serve to provide for his wife and children. It is dishonorable for a husband to allow his wife to provide for the family, and this shame is often publicly denounced" (Bado, 2006, p. 28).

The functional distinction between spouses' assets allows men to display their masculinity. In both urban and rural environments, this role requires men to assume exclusive responsibility for household expenses, which is the main guarantee of their status as family heads. Furthermore, according to certain authors, "men must control their wives' spending within the household to reduce their influence" (Kobiané, Kaboré & Gnomou/Thiombiano, 2012, p. 117). This result confirms the close relationship between masculinity and the economic subordination of women.

Furthermore, as masculinity is defined by men's financial capabilities, it becomes a criterion by which women evaluate men. Women evaluate men based on their economic power rather than the depth of their feelings (Lansky, 2001, p.104). In this context, the results reveal the deeply rooted nature of male domination. Women tend to refrain from taking a position of authority over their husbands from the moment they become a couple. This concern is related to social age, defined by status and financial autonomy: "During the formation of the couple, women clearly fear dominating their partner with their social maturity. Even when real age differences are minimal, men seek to assert their masculine superiority" (Bozon, 1990, p. 583). This dynamic reflects the belief that a man's social honor elevates his wife's status (Bozon, 1990, p. 335). Conversely, when a man is demeaned, his wife suffers a corresponding social devaluation. Masculinity is this symbolic violence that governs couples, insofar as wives themselves work to submit to it. Social competition further strengthens representations of masculinity through men's control of household resources. Women may thus be unconsciously instrumentalized by men as symbols of their ability to provide for their families (Broda, 2014, p. 286).

Another important result of this research is that, despite the fact that masculinity is the main characteristic of men in many social representations (Jodelet, 1997; Abric, 1994), in

conjugal relationships, the demands of daily life force men to relinquish certain traditional prerogatives of their masculinity. As Ratele (2020, p. 5) affirms, masculinity is a place in gender relations rather than a biological attribute. This means that masculinity is fundamentally dynamic, relational, and contextual: it can be contested, negotiated, or even lost due to the individual's social or economic disaffiliation (Castel, 2000). In contexts of economic precariousness or marginalization, as often observed in sub-Saharan Africa, economically subjugated men struggle to embody masculinity, pushing them to make pragmatic adjustments (Ratele, 2016, p. 97). Similarly, this result is corroborated by studies that emphasize the fact that social representations only weigh heavily on individuals when they are in the presence of significant social actors (Moscovici, 1984, p.15; Abric, 1994.). In the intimacy of the couple, practical arrangements, daily negotiations, and compromises often take precedence over dominant social norms (Ratele, 2013, p. 56). The efforts of men to keep secret the significant financial and material contributions of their wives help preserve the perceived integrity of masculinity — a mechanism that protects the public image of men in the face of the threat of a "loss" of status (Ratele, 2014, p.124). Similarly, reproaches of insubordination addressed to the wife not only aim to reaffirm gendered authority, but also to protect the marital secret surrounding the negotiated contractuality of masculinity between spouses — a contractuality that is fluid and pragmatic, which contradicts rigid external representations (Ratele, 2022, p. 143).

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to analyze the social constructs surrounding masculinity in the context of women's financial participation in household management. The study adopted a qualitative approach grounded in social representation theory. The results show that financial leadership within the household is the foundation of masculinity. Men are recognized as heads of the family because they assume part of the responsibility for family expenses. The persistence of male dominance therefore depends on the maintenance of men's economic power. Recognizing women's contributions undermines masculinity and implies that men consent to sharing their authority in marital affairs. Men do not, however, reject women's financial contributions. They accept them discreetly. To preserve the image of the "omnipotent man," husbands silence their wives regarding their financial contributions or the gifts they offer them. Through this concealment, male authority is symbolically maintained despite economic realities. This research implies that social norms are flouted within the intimacy of couples. Situated rationality clashes with social representations.

Yet, reducing gender inequalities remains one of the main challenges facing development initiatives worldwide. Relationships characterized by domination and exclusion undermine development efforts, particularly those related to the Sustainable Development Goals. However, analyses of these relationships often overlook the family sphere, a microsystem capable of significantly influencing development outcomes. This research therefore contributes to enriching the concept of masculinity by demonstrating how social norms shape women's inclusion in household management. This research establishes a link between intra-household fulfillment and support for women's public inclusion. By contextualizing masculinity according to cultural contexts, it serves to legitimize male dominance through a man's ability to fully provide for his household.

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