Gender-based violence as the outcome of maleness and egotism among Congolese male migrants located in the South African City of Durban

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the relationship between masculinities, narcissism, and gender-based violence (GBV) among Congolese male refugees in Durban, South Africa. The research uses a qualitative approach and 25 in-depth interviews to identify major themes. Results show that Congolese male refugees reinforce their masculinities through narcissistic behaviors, which contribute to GBV. Societal stakeholders in Durban should be involved in addressing GBV prevention initiatives to hinder men's narcissistic attitudes and beliefs. Recognizing a partner's depth can help reduce GBV by recognizing the positive attention they expect from them.

Introduction

This paper delves in exploring the connection between masculinity, egotism, and gender-based violence (GBV) among Congolese male refugees residing in Durban. This relationship is paramount in-depth examination since it reveals how narcissism and masculinity are among major causes of GBV. Patriarchy norms remain the main dictate for the characteristics of a typical male in every society. Thus, masculinity is never universal since it varies from culture to culture. Its manifestation often results in violent acts, such as GBV. Through the process of socialization, men develop the attitudes, beliefs, and gender roles that define men. In the context of this research, socialization is a kind of education that promotes masculinity, and it emboldens discriminating behaviors by training boys and girls to behave differently.

On the other hand, egotistic attitudes and behaviors among males can promote masculinity and lead to GBV. According to Cuncic (2023), grandiose and fragile are two varieties of egotisms, with the former implying that a narcissistic man feels more powerful compared to those in his circle. Egotism or narcissism appears in some men as egocentrism and self-admiration, which leads to grandiosity, entitlement, exhibitionism, and inflated self-esteem (Nkromeya, 2022). The complex of inferiority makes some men think their level of self-esteem is lower than that of others, whom they see as a potential threat. For a narcissistic man, such irritation is frustrating because it can interfere with his emotions, which can generate manipulative and aggressive attitudes, all manifesting as GBV. Grandiose narcissists often willingly harm or influence others to achieve their egotistical goals, but covert or weak narcissistics exhibit meek attitudes and appreciate those who approve their low self-esteem (Vignando & Bizumic, 2023). Covert narcissists seem hypersensitive to criticism and display passive or destructive behaviors like avoidance, manipulation, or aggression when they feel threatened. Therefore, they develop the feelings of dishonor, remorse, and self-doubt, which can sometimes make them perpetrate violence in order to feel respected (Mahindra & Gandiram, 2022).
In effect, egotism and GBV overlap in the sense that male aggression looks more overt and grandiose in character. Vignando and Bizumic (2023) agree that men's attitudes of narcissism are a response to supposed threats to their excessive self-esteem, which often creates brutality. Besides, narcissism reflects masculinity and masculine gender identity because patriarchy condones them by demanding men to control women to feel manly (Blinkhorn et al., 2018). This elucidates the cultural adherence of males to gender stereotypes and the support of their power over women through their submission. Accordingly, Green et al. (2019) explain how male narcissists inspire and reinforce masculine behaviors toward their female partners in the name of men's social entitlement for power and influence over women.

This study used the theory of masculinity, encompassing hegemonic masculinity. The latter encourages the dominance of men over women in families and communities. Such a control clarifies how men may stigmatize women by using socially built and accumulated preconceptions. In patriarchal societies, women are subordinate to men which allow males to abuse them. Moreover, narcissism nurture toxic masculinity because grandiose egotistic men feel super masculine, an attitude that makes them think they are above everyone. Men can still break toxic masculinities and embrace constructive ones, which is the result of socialization.

We know little about how males simultaneously exhibit narcissistic and masculine qualities to commit GBV because most research focuses on women as victims of male GBV. Besides, the relationship between maleness, egotism, and gendered violence remains unexplored because of an overrepresentation of males in the narcissistic literature. Overall, this connection sounds like an intriguing process that can aid in understanding male GBV as the outcome of narcissism and masculinity. Therefore, the curiosity of researchers to embark on that discovery.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical and conceptual background**

Researchers reviewed and explored units of research about masculinity and egotism as cause of GBV, including the theories that informed this research. The unit of literature review shed lighter on the theoretical context and empirical review.

**Theoretical context**

The theory of masculinity informed this research. This theory embraces hegemonic masculinity that refers to a man's authority and dominance over other men and women in his family and community. This serves as an example of how society supports stigmatizing biases towards females while condoning men's narcissistic attitudes and lack of empathy toward women. Therefore, men's selfishness and lack of empathy, a masculine feature that targets women, feed GBV through masculinity and narcissism.

**Literature review on masculinities, egotism and GBV in DRC**

Masculinity refers to the possession of characteristics or qualities that are typical of a man, which differs from culture to culture. Expression of masculinity often leads to forms of violence, including gender-based violence (GBV). Socialization is a process by which males learn masculine attitudes, behaviors, as well as gender roles. It fosters masculinity and discriminatory activities by teaching boys and girls to behave differently. Thus, Di Bianca and Mahalik (2022) said that "gender roles edict that boys can get more time outside playing while girls spend theirs in the kitchen helping their mothers.” Gender related roles could be positive or negative since society favors certain identities over others, which leads to power differentials (Barnett et al., 2016). This often results in masculine identities being preferred to feminine ones, which promotes specific versions of masculinities, such as hegemonic masculinities (Caiozzo et al., 2018). Such masculinities remain the form of masculinity that most Congolese men aspire to in their specific time and space.

Hegemonic masculinities vary depending on communities but still have similarities. They require that men are the primary breadwinners or providers in the family (Bilimoria, 2023). However, the Congolese context of armed conflicts and poverty has hindered men from feeding their families, which has deeply frustrated many. According to Mugisho and Muthuki (2022), a man who fails to provide bread for his family becomes an incomplete, a condition that makes him automatically lose his maleness. Having a job, and particularly a decent one remains one of the greatest masculine trait that most males endeavor for because a jobless man cannot be a real bread earner or gain family and social respect. Thus, failing to secure one makes many men become virulent because other men and women might disdain them. This condition has often pushed many Congolese men to perpetrate violence to regain the respect they deserve in their families.

Additionally, some Congolese men often fear empowered women because they think such women have taken their masculine powers and privileges. Mulungela (2011) approves that deep women scare some men because when the latter see more empowered women than them, they think they can easily steal their masculine social power, which they can use to influence other women. Women’s liberation and unity remains a crucial threat to the male hegemony because men think they can make women to oppose rigorously male influence and authority at all societal levels to do battle with male social privileges. This woman’s condition makes Dutton et al. (2015) illustrate how it can easily facilitate them to recover from GBV moral wounds, to rely on themselves and have access to economic activities.

On the other hand, another attitude most men present to feel manlier is degrading women in various ways. One of those techniques is men’s supposedly insatiable sex drive (Cooper et al., 2012). Some men believe they are more masculine in case they have multiple
sexual partners, officially or unofficially, which connotes polygamy and side chicks’ attitude among many men. Some men’s masculine behaviors are stigmatizing for women, as it is the case for sexual orientation. According to Corry et al. (2018), patriarchal societies forbid homosexuality since masculinity in society absolutely rejects that type of sexuality. This makes it easier to comprehend the stigmatizing attitude that most Congolese men have toward sexual health and orientation. Mugisho (2016) emphasized that “Congolese males always take decisions regarding sexual activity since they decide when, where and how to have sex, and when to have children and how many”. Finally, society expects males to display physical strength or toughness, which sometimes encompasses using GBV and other forms of violence to control others (Arabi, 2017; Philipson, 2015). This is where some men express their masculinity by beating their wives, or engaging in physical combat with other men. All these scenarios depict how society encourages men to overpower women in the DRC since it permits them to confirm they are respected men (Mugisho & Muthuki, 2022).

The combination of the above aspects proves that masculinities and GBV overlap in the DRC, either at family of societal levels. This because the DRC is a patriarchal system with norms that foster idealized masculinities. Maleness depicts a contradictory relationship between ideal hegemonic maleness and the realities of men’s lives, which triggers gender inequalities (Chisholm & Tidy, 2017). Social structures foster gendered imbalances because the latter encourage masculinity and normalize GBV as a way of addressing some issues. The negative conceptualization of masculinity at household and community levels inevitably fuels both gender inequality and GBV. In turn, society has preset traditional activities that visibly depend on gender. For instance, Congolese traditions disallow men to lay their beds or cook because that remains the woman’s responsibility, and a married woman cannot climb a house to repair it or milk a cow because that is the man’s duty (Mugisho, 2011). When men inflict their decisions on females, they want to make respect their position as men, although it may hamper women’s rights. Therefore, considering the various ways communities define a real man, Dolan (2020) and Zerach (2016) conclude that such perspective opens a room to a crisis described as failing, dysfunctional and violent masculinities.

Men’s aggression and gendered violence can sometimes generate hyper-masculinities. Congruent with Mugisho (2016), this form of masculinity encompasses three main ideas, including the recognition that danger is real, expression of dominance through violence and finally, rough sexual attitudes. Most Congolese men resort to these aspects to commit gendered violence, although they infringe human rights, either to their women or to other men in their vicinity. Similarly, the outbreak of armed conflicts in the DRC has reinforced these attitudes because male combatants used them, singly or in conjunction with each other.

Additionally, men can destroy toxic masculinity by looking at it in a different angle of constructive maleness. Such masculinity infers that boys and men can develop manly behaviors, including hegemonic masculinity, at the family and community levels, which opposes toxic masculinity (Boonzaier, 2020). The strategy aims at enabling males to weaken their hegemonic system and make healthier lifestyle choices. Unfortunately, interventions to combat GBV have largely excluded men or put them in the position of accused, apparently unaware that such processes aggravate already strained relations between men and women (Hester, 2021).

Alternatively, other men adopt the egotistic attitude as an expression of their masculinity. The American Psychiatric Association defines narcissism as self-admiration and egocentrism of some men, leading to overt grandiosity, entitlement, exhibitionism and inflated self-esteem (Grijalva et al., 2023). Most men resort to GBV when they feel inferior or think their level of their self-esteem is low compared to that of their victims whom they see as real threat (Brenner, 2018; Talbot et al., 2015). Additionally, there exist two subtypes of narcissism: grandiose narcissism, and vulnerable narcissism, characterised by overt shyness, shame, hypersensitivity and low self-esteem (Leonard, 2021). The grandiose subtype dominates vulnerable narcissism, with over 75% of the empirical literature depicting it as an indicator of narcissistic trait (Ludwig, 2020). An overreliance on grandiose features may have implications for gender differences in narcissism. Indeed, Congolese men embody narcissistic attitudes considering their personality constructs that exist thanks to masculine stereotypes in the DRC, including physical expressions of aggression, an authoritarian character, entitled exploitation, and an excessive need for power (Mulungela, 2011).

In other contexts, some men can strengthen their masculine traits because they feel exposed, which makes them resort to antagonistic interpersonal styles. Congruent with Grijalva et al. (2023) and Napikoski (2021), egotistic individuals are particularly prone to experience injury to any real or imagined threat, with attributes such as entitlement, envy, need for attention, arrogance and extreme sensitivity in response to criticisms creating discord in intimate relationships. This confirms how Congolese men who are high in narcissism, not those in low traits, are more likely to perpetrate GBV to their family members, including their wives. Thus, narcissism and GBV overlap in the sense that male violence seems more overt and grandiose in nature and their attitudes of narcissism are a response to alleged threats to their exaggerated self-esteem (Arquila, 2022). On the other hand, female GBV sounds indirect and subtle in nature (Green et al., 2019), and linked to a low self-esteem in response to aggressive behaviour (Barnett & Powell, 2016). The above views explain why most Congolese men perpetrate GBV as the consequence of their differential self-regulatory strategies among them and their women as long as they want to attain their narcissistic goals. Concisely, Congolese men are more likely to express overt/grandiose narcissism, and women use more discreet and indirect ways to obtain their self-worth. Lamkin, Lavner and Ava et al (2020) argue that understanding gendered expressions in narcissism can impact GBV in families and society, a process that can explore gender differences in grandiose and vulnerable egotism, within all attributes of GBV, such as physical, sexual and psychological violence.
A lot of research has focused on women as victims of male GBV. However, little has documented how male perpetrate GBV by combining both their masculine and egotistic traits simultaneously. In fact, an overrepresentation of males in the narcissism literature is the cause of not exploring the connection among maleness, egotism and gendered violence. Such connection sounds an interesting strategy that can help to understand male GBV as the result of masculinity and egotism. Therefore, this research set out to address the two key questions below:

i. How do you understand masculinity and egotism among Congolese men in Durban?

ii. To what extent do you think Congolese men use masculinities and egotism to prompt GBV?

**Empirical review**

This section helps to understand how maleness and egotism can lead to abusive attitudes and behaviors. It accomplishes this by outlining some research that has confirmed those factors.

Nkromeyea (2022) used focus groups discussions with 30 male students to study power, masculinity, and narcissism among university students in Ghana. The results demonstrated the connection between those three criteria, because men in positions of authority want to feel like real men. In fact, men enjoy respect as males in their environments, which makes some develop arrogant attitudes and beliefs that impose deference in their circles. In most cases, this attitude has caused some males to act harshly verbally or physically in their circles. Additionally, the study found that when compared to female students, male students are more likely to display narcissistic tendencies.

Furthermore, Ludwig (2020) studied how men in a working setting in Madagascar were more self-absorbed compared to women, which led them to obnoxious manners. With 50 men and 50 women, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The results revealed that 70% of men were more egotistic compared to women. For women, 55% acknowledged that in order to feel more like women, males needed to place them at the center of their activities. In both cases, males and females, egotistical attitudes often caused misunderstandings and sometimes clashes.

Finally, yet importantly, Mahindra and Gandiram (2022) researched self-admiration factors and GBV in India to only find that married males over the age of 40 who exhibit narcissism do so as an expression of their masculine identity. They discovered through questionnaires and focus groups that most Indian women are more vulnerable to GBV because they live in a patriarchal environment where males must assert their dominance and females must submit. Such compliance suggests that the woman views the man as the center of her existence. Gender-based violence has frequently been a result of such assertiveness in many Indian communities.

**Research and Methodology**

In terms of methodology, the researchers used a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews in order to gather information. Before any interview, researchers sought and obtained informed consent from all interviewees involved in the research. Furthermore, researchers applied a purposive sampling to select the 25 Congolese male refugees living in the South African’s city of Durban who willingly participated to this research. The researchers used in-depth interviews thanks to an interview guide in order to collect information that allows the understanding of how masculinity and narcissism can trigger gender-based violence among Congolese male migrants. Although the verbatim of the interviewees seem general, they apply to their personal experiences. For data analysis, the researchers applied thematic analysis to identify the themes included in the collected data.

The following sections are the analysis of the research outcomes through the themes resulting from the data breakdown in view of the three questions that guided the research.

**Data analysis**

Interviewees to this research confirmed that egotism and masculinity overlap, which intensifies GBV among Congolese male refugees residing in the South Africa’s city of Durban.

**Men’s egotistic attitudes fuel gendered violence**

Results of this study confirm that self-absorption causes men to exhibit selfish behaviors toward women as well as intolerance and prejudice toward them. According to Lambe et al. (2016), egotism is a sort of egotism that involves a need for admiration, a lack of empathy, and a sense of entitlement. Accordingly, Congolese male refugees often develop an excessive sense of their own importance. Arabi (2017) acknowledges that most males have an excessive demand for attention and a desire for admiration. It is simpler for men to abuse women when they are unable to comprehend or care about other people’s feelings, especially those of women. Interviewee Nola DBN 2021 shares: 2021.

...Yes, depending on the circumstances. I can never lower myself as a man. If I am able to put myself in that condition, it means I am making myself a vassal. I am putting myself under the women by doing that. No! For us men, it cannot operate that way. People must feel and understand that a man is present here. I do not care about others around me because I am the center of attention now. I am the world that everyone needs to see.
The above excerpt describes how most males think of themselves as supermen. Due to their unreasonable belief that no other person can compare to them, many Congolese men adopt this mindset and treat their wives at home. Similar research by Carton and Egan (2017) in Madagascar found that when males try to get everyone's attention, they become hostile toward anyone who objects to their behavior. In other words, Congolese men want their spouses to admire them, as they need too much attention from them. The position mirrors how men frequently lack the capacity to comprehend or consider the sentiments of others, particularly their women, which results in gendered abuse.

Furthermore, Arabi (2017) argues that heterosexual egotistic men are more likely to exhibit sexist attitudes toward heterosexual women than any other group, including homosexual men and women. Such men are good at rebuking girls and women for being unable to fall passionately or sexually in love with them. Similarly, some Congolese male refugees frequently are keen on abusing their partners because they identify with an antagonistic and violent position toward heterosexual women more than they do with other groups. Therefore, Lambe et al. (2016) contend that while narcissists may wish to preserve their sense of superiority over everyone, they particularly enjoy subordinating heterosexual women. Interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 shares:

*I am a not a real man and when my feelings are reduced, I can feel I am an incomplete man. Every man is superior to women and to some other men too. No man on this earth who can hate the entire world to tell him he is above them all. We men have power in society, in our families and in communities. We must enjoy our superiority and control. It is our social right. It is because of this that every man must subdue his wife. Even at work, he must behave the same. Feeling self-appreciated is also a patriarchal attitude in us men, and we must enjoy it."

The views of the above interviewee confirm that no matter how abusive it may be, men cannot cede their control to women. In other words, sadistic men will stop at nothing to maintain their supremacy over women and other men, which is a characteristic of masculinity. Men always seek attention from others around them, and Ava et al. (2020) emphasize that men would never submit to women's dominance in any area of life out of fear of losing their social privilege of power.

Several other respondents shared that egotism and misogyny overlap, as they encompass masculinity traits. In line with Blinkhorn et al. (2015), most male narcissists who are sadists include those sexist beasts that target women online. In other words, some narcissist men feel more masculine by harassing women in any setting. Similarly, Dickinson and Pincus (2023) found that narcissistic men frequently harass women on social media while making violent threats and disparaging remarks about their brainpower and beauty. Such men behave that way when the victims attempt to speak up or are present on any internet forum. Clift et al. (2018) and Wolven (2015) admit that narcissistic men stalk and threaten women on social networking websites, mostly Facebook and Twitter. There is a known link between men's frequently developing sexist attitudes toward women and violence against women (Dworkin et al., 2015). Consequently, many of the Congolese men who abuse their wives had already committed GBV. In other words, because it has been a part of their past, these men are never reluctant to abuse their wives.

Conversely, misogyny conveys masculinity as both control and punish women who challenge male dominance (Leonard, 2021). The traditional definition of misogyny as hatred of women sounds very simplistic because it excludes how perpetrators of misogynistic violence may love certain women, such as their mothers (Green & Charles, 2019). Misogyny, on the other hand, rewards women who preserve the status quo and penalizes those who disagree with women's inferior status. Because misogyny sounds like being the enforcement arm of patriarchy, Bilimoria (2023) specifies that sexism can occasionally excuse and justify patriarchy. Interviewee Biri DBN 2021 states:

*We were children and we could see that our fathers were leaders. They had power and controlled families and communities. No woman could raise voice or oppose men's words. A woman who dared so was seriously taught a lesson her children would never forget. We men abuse women but we love and cannot abuse our daughters, mothers and sisters. Again, we also see men encouraging those women who support the patriarchal structure. Then you can think those women never see how men abuse women or make others suffer."

This interviewee elucidates how men behave abusively and violently towards most women, except their female relatives. To Ava et al. (2020) thinking that misogyny is hatred of women is wrong because perpetrators of misogynistic violence may still love and protect their mothers. In other words, Congolese men who are misogynistic befriend women that help men to abuse more other women and encourage them to understand that men’s violent attitudes are normal. For the same reason, Research by Bilimoria (2023) confirms that some women support patriarchy by cheering on chauvinist men, proving that sexism occasionally justifies and encourages patriarchy. Sexist ideologies often discriminate against men and women by asserting sex differences that go beyond what is known or could be known, and can go against the greatest available scientific information. Usually, misogyny separates respectable women from wicked ones with the aim of punishing the latter. Overall, Dickinson and Pincus (2023) conclude that sexism is like wearing a lab coat, whereas misogyny is like a witch-hunt.

**Egotism expresses masculine gender identity**

Most interviewees admitted that egotism could convey masculinity and male gender identity. Similarly, a paradox hides masculine gender identities through gender roles (Green et al., 2019; Hester, 2021). This view captures strong pattern of perceived gender-role violations underpinning men’s attitudes of gendered violence that Congolese male refugees who are narcissists perpetrate. This view apprehendshow culturally prescribed norms of gender stereotypes and the endorsement of males dominate their women through their...
submitiveness. Such discussion remains worthwhile because, according to Zerach (2016), it paints how “male narcissists manipulate and reinforce masculine traits and attitudes toward their partners in their social prerogative for power and exploitation” as patriarchy stipulates and condones it. Interviewee Gege DBN comments that:

“...we as men must confirm our maleness, how we are and live in society. No man expects us to hate our identity. We do not cause chaos; we do not torture or abuse anyone but that is who we are. I would say men are damaging if they present their narcissist behaviors. We have the entitlement we have and you too as a fellow man knows the benefit of the doubt in all situations.”

The view of this interviewee clarifies how society has preset norms that inspire men to confirm their maleness. Clift et al. (2018) say that male’s identity sounds a cultural description of those norms’ society has preset in order to trigger males to overpower females, either at family or community levels. Therefore, Congolese male refugees must understand who they are in terms of culture and society, making them to better define and recognize themselves. Congruently, Gege DBN 2021 notes that

...having a label seems reassuring for us men because it provides us a place to be in our own minds, in our social lives, and in the things, we do every day. Many of us men can attest to this, but it holds true among the journey of our male children.”

Subsequently, Cory et al. (2018) ascertain that men stick to cultural norms of gender stereotypes for they boost their control and subjugation of their women. Such context confirms why Congolese male refugees with narcissistic attitudes manipulate women as long as that is a cultural prerogative society offers them. In other terms, expression of masculinity through power exertion and mistreatment of women often end up gendered violence. Succinctly, Congolese men who are narcissists appreciate patriarchal norms because they allow them to use hard power and impose their abusive manners in society. Hard power can occasionally result in sexual assault when a narcissistic man fears his lack of competence. Versluis (2022) describes how a narcissistic male may mistreat the girls in his charge in an effort to regain social status and improve undesirable, downright offensive, and even unacceptable self-perceptions. In fact, several interviewees agreed that men in power could engage in sexual harassment if they feel insecure in their positions of authority. Many of these behaviors may be successful when combined with the desire for power and sexual gratification (Neuharth, 2021). Sexual gratification comes in when a man uses sexual harassment to demand sexual favors in exchange for a financial gain, such as sexual favors for offering a promotion. However, Brenner (2018) asserts that most men do not need sexual desire because other factors like aggression, personality, and power motives are more important. Nolo DBN 2021, who participated in the interview, stated, “we males are sometimes foolish. There are moments when you want to have sex even when you do not want to. This seems we have the right to abuse or humiliate her in this way.” Although this excerpt suggests that men engage in GBV, such as sexual violence, simply because they are men, many men do not actually act in such a way.

On the other hand, presenting narcissist attitudes and behaviors denotes male gender. Likewise, Boonzaier (2020) and Wolven (2015) narrate that narcissistic etiquettes are culturally prevalent and normal in men because they portray maleness. This illustrates how society and culture allow Congolese male refugees to behave narcissistically because they are in a strong patriarchal society. Research by Talbot et al. (2015) confirms that male led societies promote masculinity by discouraging men to behave feminine, such as being compassionate, emotional or tender. Hence, Congolese male refugees are narcissist and very controlling for their women. Interviewee Sera DBN 2021 acknowledges:

Look, you and I are men, and we shall always be who we are. We as men embody vanity; we love ourselves, and we are somehow egotistic. I mean these are some of our attitudes, and they connect with every male’s gender. I think this association tends to reinforce who we are as men, as men are typically tough. We like to use our hard power to dominate our women and even other men around us and in our families.

The big majority of the interviewees echoed similar views as the above ones as they perceived the harm men exact on women because society encourages them to behave so. Clift at al. (2018) admit that society overlooks such behaviors because of deeply ingrained gendered scripts surrounding gendered violence perpetration linked to masculine traits, which promotes toxic masculinity. Male powerlessness and social beliefs of masculinity

Results of this research revealed the possibility of men to become helpless because of social expectations of masculinity. Caizzo et al. (2016) and Chisholm and Tidy (2017) postulate that the reinforcement of gendered stereotypes can easily transmit feelings of distress and sometimes frustration among males in society. Frustration can deter men’s narcissistic attitudes, making them lose their self-centeredness, selfishness and self-loving behaviors. Such loss clarifies the hopelessness men have once they do not embody strong masculine traits that can allow them to subdue their women anymore. This illustrates how some Congolese male refugees failed to understand they embody strong and certain masculine characters that define them as men in their communities. Similar research by Phillipson (2015) confirms that when men halt to acknowledge and abide to masculine norms prescribed in a patriarchal structure, they become like a toothless lion. Weak masculinity kills narcissic behaviors, making it unfavorable for the men who wish to behave manly, which in other terms triggers for feminine traits into men (Dolan, 2020; Hester, 2021; Neuharth, 2021). In the mind of Green et al. (2019), such background is likely to prompt women to develop narcissism attitudes and those masculine qualities coward men have deserted. Reasonably, this might explain the reasons why some women who look masculine can easily abuse not only the men who look feminine, but also other women. For the same reason, some Congolese male refugees ignored their masculinity, which emaciated their narcissistic traits. The fading of masculinity also affects men’s narcissistic traits, which implies men’s failure to stick to cultural norms that reinforce their masculine traits as they are enshrined in patriarchal structure (Bilimoria,
2023). To that effect, narcissistic social norms regarding gender have substantial costs on the men survivors of GBV. Interviewee Lusha DBN 2021 remarks:

Now you see! I had made the decision to split from the mother of our four kids. She had grown deeply egotistical and more self-centered. I was no longer able to tolerate her attitudes and actions. She had adopted a man’s demeanor at this point. The situation got so bad that I made the decision to visit a lawyer and ask for a violent preventive order against her. I made this choice after I had left the home. She persisted in terrorizing and upsetting me while intimidating my family and other close relatives. The attorney I spoke with informed me that I was unable to seek a restraining order against her. The lawyer said he would laugh at me out of the tribunal. He told me that I looked pretty well built, stable and fitting in my attire.

If we take a closer look at each aspect in this section, the results show that maleness represents dissimilar and gendered ways in strategic attempts at self-construction. Green and Charles (2019) echo that the manifestations of narcissism vary widely among cultures due to change in gender definitions and socially acceptable gender roles. Narcissism is thus a conveyor of masculinity, as much a product of culture as it is of behavior. This emphasizes the intricate and historically pervasive gender roles present in the gendered violence forms of narcissism as well as the processes and dynamics of gendered self-construction that underlie them.

**Egotistical men’s failure to handle deep women**

Some interviewees in this research agreed that a narcissistic man could not successfully handle a deep feminine spouse. Since an egocentric man focuses on himself, a deep woman’s behaviors will always sound strange to him. This collision of character often results in the man’s use of hard power to contain his woman. Ava et al. (2020) state that a narcissist man presents traits depicting unreasonably high sense of his own importance. This portrays how some Congolese male refugees with inconsiderate characters resort to GBV because they have failed to get the attention they had sought from their partners. To Barnett et al. (2016:100), that situation often “escalates into verbal, emotional and physical abuse and sometimes killing can happen.” Gendered violence occurs with male narcissist men’s arrogances collide with those of a deep female partner because the latter dispels nonsense.

Grijalva et al. (2023) admits a deep woman always likes to deep because shallow conversations do not at all interest them. This woman hardly engages in small talk; she prefers to quit the conversation rather than involve in superficial hollow concerns. A narcissistic man will fail to handle such a woman, making him to impose submission to her (Carton & Egan, 2017). Most Congolese male refugees believe that when a woman opposes masculine attitudes and beliefs, she calls harm on herself. Interviewee Sala DBN 2023 shared:

> I need to feel that my woman is listening to me as her man, and is close to me. In case she is overly curious and wants to know everything about me, she can awaken my demons and cause the relationship to end. You now recognize how a woman’s depth may ruin anything. Still, if you are a strong man, you can deal with a powerful woman. If not, this may result in the habit of going behind the other partner in the marriage, and this can create dishonesty and perfidy in families, between a man and his wife, or between other occupants of the same roof.

At the family level, this “going behind the other” attitude can stain, collide and collapse the couple for it depicts an apparent deceitful habit. According to Cooper et al. (2012), the narcissistic man feels disdained or unsuited of the thankfulness and endeavors he has reaped, which makes the couple fights based on provocative behaviors. By feeling unfit, some Congolese male refugees nurture impostor syndrome, an emotional aspect that makes them feel disdained, regardless of whatever success they may have realized in their life, in any domain. Hence, Jonason and Davis (2018) believe a narcissistic man develops an impostor syndrome that fragilises him, as he consistently doubts his abilities, even in situations where he usually performs well. In the same way, Congolese men linked this condition to a negative monologue that portrays the emotions of worry, despair, uneasiness, and restlessness. Despite his education, intellectual luggage, and performances, a narcissistic man always fears the way people expose him in a less impressive manner than his surround would present him. Individuals with such attitude are more than deserving and worthy of the healthy praise and recognition they receive.

Having stated that, a narcissistic man cannot manage a deep mannered woman since he is unaware that she is not humiliating him. According to Arabi (2017) and Arquilla (2022), men cannot maintain a relationship with such women for an extended period due to their impenetrable sense of manners. Congolese male refugees misunderstand their women’s complex personalities, which pushes them to brutalize them unaware of breaking down their relationship. In effect, the fragilization of men’s narcissistic attitudes predicts perpetration of gendered violence in their locale. Jonason and Davis (2018) identify grandiose narcissism among males as a major positive harbinger of emotional exploitation against women. Majority of the narcissitic Congolese male refugees turn to GBV because they cannot control their emotions. Narcissistic men are especially sensitive to suffering harm from any real or perceived threat due of their naturally fragile nature and hostile interpersonal tendencies. This happens because of traits like entitlement, envy, a need for attention, arrogance, and an acute sensitivity to criticism that create conflict in close relationships (Ava et al., 2020). In addition, men with high levels of narcissism are more prone to abuse a close spouse than men with moderate levels of narcissism (Wright et al., 2020). The grandiose aspect of narcissism denotes its relationship with GBV though it is looks hard to capture adequately deep women's narcissistic characteristics. Congolese male refugees who are narcissistic find it challenging to comprehend a deep woman since they cannot relate to the particularities of the qualities she seeks in her relationship. In narcissism, most men overuse grandiose traits to reinforce their masculinity. In fact, typical narcissistic representations embody a personality type that closely resembles...
masculine stereotypes in society, such as physical violence, an authoritarian mentality, entitled exploitation, and an overwhelming thirst for power (Corry et al., 2018; Grijalva et al., 2023). However, grandiose narcissism can help to classify gender variations in narcissism by allowing men to exploit their manly influence. Therefore, masculinity wants Congolese male refugees to feel dominating in their narcissistic grandiose in their homes and in any other setting. According to Zeigler-Hill et al. (2018), conflict outbreaks when narcissistic males exhibit their dominant behavior in the home in case their women are deep. Siniyo DBN 2021, an interviewee, confides:

*I think most of us [men] cannot comprehend a concealed woman. This is a hard task because if you love yourself a lot, you will never know what kind of man that woman is looking for. Our society wants us men to live like men, to dominate our homes and any other situation. Did God not tell us to dominate everything and rule over all livings? It is here that the men who love themselves can apply their influence as men. If you center on yourself, then you can use that power to dominate your woman and the family. Your deep woman will oppose you, and this will cause contention.*

The narrative of this interviewee demonstrates how arguments may arise when a narcissistic man behaves in a dominant way toward his deep female lover. According to Philipson (2015), most deep women live alone because their narcissistic male spouses underestimate them, which is humiliating to women. Narcissistic men, like all masculine men, lack the emotional intelligence necessary to understand well the complexity of women's inner minds. Perhaps this is the main reason why most narcissistic Congolese male refugees are unable to differentiate such women from other women they come across. Hence, some men are unable to identify the outstanding qualities of deep women because of their narcissistic personality. Such men appear to be brutal to their deep women because they have no idea how to keep them by their sides. Despite the fact that some men are unaware of effective approaches to use for adjusting to these women, the latter are still beautiful people who never waste time worrying about what other people think of them. This mentality offers deep women the self-assurance to always speak up for themselves and passionately defend themselves when narcissistic men try to provoke violence or even just treat them unfairly (Grijalva et al., 2014). These women are completely aware of their glows and grows, as well as what they can offer and what they deserve; therefore, they have accepted this choice. Alternatively said, these women have morals that are challenging or difficult for narcissistic males. Arabi (2017) claims that the expectations of deep women will continue to be high and perhaps even terrifying to some narcissistic men as long as they continuously work to improve their own character to avoid their damaging prides.

Thence, a few narcissistic Congolese male refugees, however, acknowledged that the majority of deep women never alter their depth nature to display their love for their husbands. Some of these men feel compelled either to embrace these women in their harshness and flaws or to get out of their way in order to avoid arguments that may trigger GBV. In line with Arquilla (2022), this implies that the narcissistic man will ultimately give up his masculinity in order to improve his chances of establishing a connection with his deep woman. Some interviewees, such as Nolo DBN 2021 described this as "an emasculating behavior that reduces a man to nothing, like a woman." To put it another way, a real man should maintain his masculinity since a deep woman is unlikely to change her conduct. Accordingly, Neuharth (2021) acknowledges that such a philosophical woman will smash the door in a narcissistic man's face, but she will also not stand by and let him treat her like a toy that he can use to his satisfaction.

Esmaculation makes a man so incomplete that any woman may control him to her advantage, a situation comparable to a toothless lion that has lost his predatory trait. Mugisho and Muthuki (2022) confirm that man’s emasculating neutralizes him and kills his male power, a condition that benefits to his woman, as she knows well he has fully lost his masculine influence. However, although this condition reduces the man’s power, it remains an opportunity for him to discover his woman’s real dark side. In effect, serious feminine flaws are comparable to a skunk’s smell, which swiftly repels hunting dogs. In other words, the harsh and irregular behaviors that some deep women may exhibit toward their partners can help the latter to understand who such women really are. The dejected and emotional pain that such a woman’s negative behavior may bring into her man’s life can certainly enrage him. In light of this, a narcissistic man may react violently to his partner’s lack of alluring attitudes and manners. Grijalva et al. (2023) and Neuharth (2021) note that a woman’s lack of gentleness but wearing frantic and guilt would never fascinate a narcissistic man; instead, it will only increase his indignation. Narcissic males can deal with their deep women more effectively if they can identify who they really are and learn more about themselves, and deep women should do the same.

**Constructive masculinity to hamper egotistic behaviors**

According to data gathered from the field, constructive masculinity can assist narcissistic males in changing their dominant maleness because it frequently leads to GBV. Dworkin et al. (2015) concur that men and women must cooperate in order to move away from abusive and domineering masculinities by embracing maleness to foster reciprocal compassion. This has the potency for Congolese male refugees to alter their unfavorable views of masculinity, as it can generate positive change. In other words, men who adopt harmful masculinity ideals have the ability to prolong GBV generational cycles by negatively influencing the behaviors and attitudes of boys and other men. As a result, transformative masculinities might shatter harmful male identity ideas and attitudes that are indicative of narcissism in some of these male migrants. Interviewee Nunu DBN 2021 concurs with this statement and adds:

*We must act like men because, yes, we are men. But I believe we need to alter the way we view ourselves as males. I am aware that as men, our culture expects us to behave a certain way. That is common but let us act like men who uplift our families and society as a whole. Both of our women and us men must move in that direction. We must see a man in a good way, not as a destructive, abusive*
factor. No and no. We must be those men and boys who build families, communities, and ourselves, we must develop into constructive men.

The verbatim of this interviewee suggests that constructive masculinities are required since they can undermine hegemonic traditional masculinities that support GBV. In fact, progressive masculinities encourage both men and women to view maleness as a way to counteract oppression of women and girls as well as any bad attitudes or beliefs that have a tendency to lead to gendered violence at various levels of society. According to Morell (2001:11), this method does inspire both men and women to embrace good attitudes that enable males to change their thought patterns through introspection on both a personal and societal level. Having said that, such a vision has the prospective to dispel men's grandiose narcissism beliefs by boosting their positive self-esteem and fostering greater hope and optimism. Reprocessed accepted cultural norms can similarly assist Congolese male refugees in addressing their narcissistic demeanors by creating a stronger sense of contentment and solidarity that can relieve subliminal tensions. According to Mugisho and Muthuki (2022), in order for transformative masculinities to be successful, society institutions such as religious organizations must cooperate. Since men's involvement in achieving gender justice is dire, male heads of those institutions can start socializing boys and other men for positive change.

Conclusions

The research has covered the connection between masculinity, egotism, and gender-based violence among Congolese male refugees residing in Durban. Because masculinity and self-absorption are major elements that are causing GBV in the community of these refugees, it was imperative to investigate this connection. On the one hand, masculinity includes the social pre-established characteristics that define a classic male. In other words, masculinity varies from culture to culture, and its manifestation often results in violent acts, such as GBV. Through the process of socialization, men develop the attitudes, behaviors, and gender roles that define a man.

The results have shown that patriarchal system allows men to exert their dominance and influence in families and society through egotism, which is an expression of maleness. This indicates how culturally imposed gender stereotypes subjugate women through their submission, which substantiates how patriarchy allows men to take advantage of women. According to Cuncic (2023), this context indorses that male narcissists use their social right for dominance and exploitation to control and promote masculine qualities and attitudes in their relationships. Congruently, some Congolese male refugees' egotistical attitudes and behaviors can also contribute to GBV because they portray their inherent masculinity. Some narcissistic males express self-admiration and egocentrism, which results in overt grandiosity, entitlement, exhibitionism, and an inflated sense of self-worth. In fact, the two forms of narcissism are grandiose and fragile, but the men who belong to the former feel more powerful than everyone they know. Grandiosity makes them to hurt or persuade others in order to fulfill their selfish ambitions. Contrarily, men who are covert narcissists exhibit passive behaviors such as avoidance, manipulation, or hostility when they feel threatened. They experience sentiments of disgrace, regret, and self-doubt, which can occasionally lead individuals to engage in violent behavior when seeking others' attention. Self-admiration and GBV overlap in the sense that male violence seems more overt and grandiose in nature and men's attitudes of narcissism are a response to alleged threats to their exaggerated self-esteem. Alternatively, narcissistic men have an issue abusing deep women because they never take nonsense. Such women are strong to the point they are less emotive and cannot be intimidated anyhow.

Finally, other results showed that masculinity and egotism intersect and significantly influence how Congolese male refugees perpetrate forms of GBV. Patriarchy encourages men to behave masculine, and narcissism is one way of confirming one's masculinity, which may lead to GBV. Men who behave narcissistically are mean because they are self-centered, and egocentric, leading to rough behavior toward their women. Results show that men become angry when their women do not consider them as they wish, which makes them emotional sentiments. Therefore, to reaffirm they are the men, they want to impose the wives to focus on them, a situation that ultimately culminates into GBV.

Addressing masculine and egotistical attitudes among Congolese male refugees in Durban would reduce GBV in their communities. Avoiding power struggle can defeat grandiose narcissists by involving men in reinforcing the development and support of the existing GBV education and dissuasion programs that can address egotism among men. Combating women's oppression requires men to see maleness in a constructive way. This can prevent narcissistic men from adopting attitudes that are more toxic or beliefs that lead to GBV. This paper calls for the involvement of all stakeholders involved in scaling down GBV prevention programs. It further calls for policy initiatives toward justifiable behaviour changes among male perpetrators of GBV. The process could imply the reconstruction of masculinities among these refugees because self-absorbed attitudes are undisclosed. Eventually, this can hugely reduce GBV by prompting the man to appreciate his woman's depth because he can now understand how much positive care she seeks from him.

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