



## Hegemonic Masculinity and its Manifestations in Wajdi Al-Ahdal's Novel *A Land without Jasmine*

Nada Ezzadeen Al-Osime\* 

[nada.ezzadeen27@gmail.com](mailto:nada.ezzadeen27@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The research aims to discuss the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its influence on societies. It tries to explain the origin of hegemonic masculinity's concept, and how the thinkers, and philosophers discussed this term, and what they wrote about it. It discusses many concepts such as masculinity, patriarchal system and tribal society, and as well as the status of women in the Yemeni society. It also explores aspects of hegemonic masculinity through the events of Wajdi Al-Ahdal's novel *A Land without Jasmine*. This research is divided into introduction and three sections; the first discusses the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the second explains the hegemonic masculinity and Patriarchal culture in the Yemeni society, the third clarifies manifestations of hegemonic masculinity, such as early marriage and depriving women of education and the conclusion. This research reached many results such as Yemeni society is considered a male-dominated society and the system that prevails in it is the patriarchal system. Furthermore, upbringing and social traditions have contributed to reinforcing a culture of male dominance in society.

**Keywords:** Man, Hegemony, Patriarchal System, Early Marriage, Women's Education.

\* MA in Literature, Republic of Yemen.

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## الهيمنة الذكورية ومعالمها في رواية وجدي الأهدل بلاد بلا سماء

ندى عز الدين العصيمي<sup>ID\*</sup>[nada.ezzadeen27@gmail.com](mailto:nada.ezzadeen27@gmail.com)

## المخلص

يهدف البحث إلى مناقشة مفهوم الهيمنة الذكورية وتأثيره على المجتمعات، ويحاول شرح أصل مفهوم مصطلح الهيمنة الذكورية، وكيف ناقش المفكرون والفلاسفة هذا المصطلح. يناقش عددًا من المصطلحات مثل الذكوري والنظام الأبوي، والمجتمع القبلي، بالإضافة إلى مكانة النساء في المجتمع اليمني. ويقوم البحث باستكشاف جوانب الهيمنة الذكورية من خلال أحداث رواية وجدي الأهدل بلاد بلا سماء. وقسم هذا البحث إلى مقدمة وثلاثة مباحث، والنتائج، الأول يناقش مفهوم الهيمنة الذكورية، والثاني يشرح الهيمنة الذكورية والثقافة الأبوية في المجتمع اليمني، والثالث يوضح بعض معالم الهيمنة الذكورية مثل الزواج المبكر وحرمان المرأة من التعليم. وقد توصل البحث إلى عدة نتائج، منها أن المجتمع اليمني يعتبر مجتمعًا ذكوريًا وأن النظام السائد فيه هو النظام الأبوي، وأن التربية والتقاليد الاجتماعية أسهمت في تعزيز ثقافة الهيمنة الذكورية في المجتمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرجل، الهيمنة، النظام الأبوي، الزواج المبكر، تعليم المرأة.

\* ماجستير أدب - الجمهورية اليمنية.

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© نُشر هذا البحث وفقًا لشروط الرخصة Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)، التي تسمح بنسخ البحث وتوزيعه ونقله بأي شكل من الأشكال، كما تسمح بتكييف البحث أو تحويله أو إضافته إليه لأي غرض كان، بما في ذلك الأغراض التجارية، شريطة نسبة العمل إلى صاحبه مع بيان أي تعديلات أُجريت عليه.



## Introduction

Hegemonic masculinity gained the attention of scholars and researchers over the last decades. The first use of this term was by Gramsci. He used it in his writings and his political speech. He also used it in an apparent way in 1925 to refer to the dictatorship of the proletariat. He used this term to keep his writing secret when he was in prison, and it was an attempt to understand the stabilization of class relations. In the writings of Gramsci, the concept of hegemony is considered general and central. We find this concept within the frame of philosophy, history, and politics. Gramsci combined theory and practice and gave us a key to dealing with reality and analyzing its contradictions.

Hegemony is considered a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Russian proletariat is considered a dominant and directed class that its dominant indicates dictatorship, and its orientation indicates leadership with the consent of the ally classes as the farmer class (Cox, and Bin Abdullah, 2021). Hegemony also means the ability to command and control. Gramsci explained that hegemony manifests the dominance of a social group in two ways, the first by describing hegemony as dominance, and the second as intellectual cultural leadership. This social group practiced its control over the opposition groups and tend to wig it and subdue them even by force of arms (Karroubi, and Al-Azadi, 1997). Hegemony according to Gramsci refers to the biggest, the greatest, the strongest which dominates the weakest parts.

The significance of this research lies in trying to explore the issue of hegemonic masculinity in Yemeni society to become a database for future researchers in this field because it will be one of the few studies that discusses this issue. In addition it tries to fill the gap in Yemeni society related to masculinity studies. Furthermore, the current research tends to globalize the issue of Yemeni masculinity through literature. The importance of the research also lies in its focus on Yemeni literature.

This research is designed to achieve many objectives such as:

- i. To survey the manifestations of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal system in Yemeni society.
- ii. To explore the manifestations of hegemonic masculinity in Wajdi Al-Ahdal's novel *A Land without Jasmine*.

The analytical approach has been chosen to explicate the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its manifestations in Yemeni society and to analyze Al-Ahdal's novel *A Land without Jasmine*.

### 1. Hegemonic Masculinity

Researchers as R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt discussed the term hegemonic masculinity in their research "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" (2005). They illustrated that the term hegemonic masculinity was formulated in the last two decades. They traced the origin of this term in



a convergence of ideas in the early 1980s and mapped the ways it was applied when research on men and masculinities expanded.

"The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools; in a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and the experience of men's bodies; and in a debate over the role of men in Australian labor politics. The high school project provided empirical evidence of multiple hierarchies in gender as well as in class terms interwoven with active projects of gender construction (Connell, and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Connell and Messerschmidt said that hegemonic masculinity influenced the thinking about social hierarchy, gender, and men. There are many papers that use the exact term hegemonic masculinity in their titles or abstracts or refer to this term in their contexts. Also, there was a big interest in this term through conferences such as the conference of Hegemonic Masculinities and International Politics which was held in early May 2005, at the University of Manchester, England. In the same vein, another conference was held in 2004 in Stuttgart.

Hegemonic masculinity has also been subjected to much criticism from several directions as poststructuralist, psychologist, materialist, and sociologist. Connell and Messerschmidt illustrated that the term hegemonic masculinity is contested by the issues which it names about political leadership and power, public and private violence, and changes in families and sexuality (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Demetrakis Z. Demetriou in his research "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique" (2001) also discussed the concept of hegemonic masculinity from Connell's point of view which he said hegemonic masculinity is "the global dominance of men over women". This definition is a single structural fact of hegemonic masculinity. It is also defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Demetriou, 2001, p 340). This dominance is not only over women, but it is also over the subordination of men or masculinities, so we can understand that hegemonic masculinity produced not only external hegemony which is considered hegemony over women, but also produced internal hegemony which is considered hegemony over subordinate masculinities, the term hegemonic masculinity refers to a social dominance of one group of men over others (Demetriou, 2001, p 341).

Demetriou clarified that hegemonic masculinity is a cultural concept, which is promoted by civil society through the production of exemplary masculinity, which is considered the reproduction of patriarchy. He also explained that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is described as a violent thoroughly heterosexual term. It was also described as a criminal practice, and it was noted as a substantially negative type. It is united



by its ugliness and negativity and by its opposition to subordinate masculinities and femininity. So, "Hegemonic masculinity is thus a closed and unified totality that incorporates no otherness. Furthermore when elements inconsistent with this unified model are noticed, they are said to be "contradictions" that undermine the coherence and dynamic of hegemonic masculinity" (Demetriou, 2001, p 347).

Bourdieu in his book *Male Domination* (1998) discussed hegemonic masculinity in a male society. He took the tribal society in Algeria as a model to reveal some of the most hidden features within the contemporary societies that are still based on hegemonic masculinity through what is called "symbolic discrimination", i.e. male and female (masculine – feminine), and they are the same, but the difference is in the biological aspect i.e. male and female bodies, and this seems to be a natural justification for the difference in the social "structure", between the "genres", especially the sexual division of labor. He also tried to deconstruct "domination and submission", or what is called "the dialectic of social exchange" between two poles of the equality of men and women (Bourdieu, 2009).

Bourdieu asserted in his book that male domination still exists through what he called "symbolic violence", this type of violence is known as soft, intangible, and invisible to the victims themselves. This type of violence is practiced in its essence by symbolic methods such as ignorance, recognition or emotion as a minimum (Bourdieu, 2009).

Bourdieu refused the idea of reducing "symbolic violence" as a spiritual violence that has no effect on reality. He considered this reduction a destroying of the idea of "symbolic violence" and it is the goal of the "materialist theory of economics and the symbolic goods" (Bourdieu, 2009), hence starts exercising the logic of hegemony, and this is what is confirmed by Bourdieu through his analysis of masculine domination. He believes that the normal social relationship between a man and a woman provides an opportunity to exercise domination in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognized by the dominant, as well as by the controller, this principle may be a language, method, lifestyle, tone of speech, way of thinking, or movement. These tools are responsible for transforming what is arbitrary into natural, we can say that from here the idea of dominance was confirmed, even if in an unannounced way in all aspects of life (Bourdieu, 1998/ 2009).

Perhaps here we stand in front of a patriarchal system that is embodied and clear in Arab societies in general, and in Yemeni society in particular. This system imposes itself as axiomatic and holistic, and it is acceptable to social structures through the social organization of space and time, and to the gender division of labor. It is acceptable to define the structure of bodies, i.e. women accept most of the things in the natural and social world, especially the relationship of dominance to which they are receptive in one way or another. It is noted that not only women accept, but there are people through whom the relationship of dominance is achieved, they see this relation as natural (Al-Arifi, 2014, p 576).



Here it can be said that masculinity dominance is what the French called "physical coercion", and socialization has a major role in confirming and entrenching the idea of masculinity dominance. It aims to give women a lower social status than men and view men as active selves in economic, official big positions, and even in marriage plans, and through this they confirm and develop of the "symbolic capital", which means the value in mutual relations between human beings, which are subject to norms, habits, values, and morals. Through it, the convictions and forms are organized in this value that does not enter in material accounts (Al-Arifi, 2014, p 577).

Hegemonic Masculinity is clear through the events of Wajdi Al-Ahdal's *A Land without Jasmine*. Jasmine complained about the suffering which she lives in her society from her male family members who are in the home or males who are outside. All gazes focus on her and her behaviors. They observed her night and day. She complained that the closest persons to her were the source of her suffering as her father, her brother, also the mother. Because of their dominance and control, she began to feel sad and unhappy. Jasmine said:

My life is nonstop suffering on account of the stares directed at me all the time, both inside our house and out. I'm under supervision night and day. No one thinks about me, about my feelings, dreams, and ambitions, or concedes that I have a right to live at ease without anyone troubling me with his inquisitive gaze and repressed desires. (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Jasmine here indicated her suffering, especially in her home. A home is considered one of the places where a person exercises his freedom, acting as he or she is, without being shy or fearful. Gaston Bachelard described the home as our first universe, it is our real universe in every sense of the word. It is the first world of the person (qtd in Bachelard, 2002). But in the novel, Jasmine's relationship with her home is reversed.

Jasmine's home was considered a place of torment and suffering because of the surveillance, oppression, and pressure that she was subjected to. Jasmine's suffering in her home started when her older brother was searching in her diaries to know who is her lover. She said, "At home, I have to put up with my oldest brother's covert attempts to read my diary. He suspects that love may have found its way into my heart. Ever since I enrolled at the University, where instruction is coed, he has been searching my papers for my hypothetical boyfriend" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Jasmine's brother who is supposed to be her closest and most supportive person became the source of her suffering because of his view of her and his beliefs. He thinks that girls go to university not to study but to make relations with males. Jasmine's brother believes that when his sister goes to her university, she brings shame and scandal to her family because she doesn't go to study, but rather for other purposes, so he reads her notes to obtain any evidence.



Al-Ahdal pictured the beliefs of most of the men in Yemeni society about the women who study in the universities which are a mixed-gender place. The Yemeni society looks at women in a short, unjust, and cruel way. The novel embodied the condition of women and their suffering, because of the masculinity society's short view of her. It conveyed to us a true picture of the reality in which women live in a society. Once a female is born and grows up, she is surrounded by restrictions and pressures from all directions.

Jasmine's brother was not the only cause of her suffering inside the house; her father also was one of these causes. She said:

My father, for his part, is also plagued by doubts about me. I can tell he says to himself when he scans my eyes, "The mature female searches for a mate"! Ever since I became a young woman and my breasts developed, he has been prejudiced against me and apprehensive, fearing that I will sully his honor, disgrace him, and besmirch his reputation. Whenever he enters or leaves our building he always stares at my window. He feels qualms about my conduct and suspects me of standing behind the windowpane to flirt with young men. I have explained to him repeatedly that, during the day, passersby really can't see through the glass, but he doesn't believe me at all. In his heart of hearts, he believes that women's wiles are formidable. (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Jasmine's Father dealt with his only daughter as his son did. He has the same belief and outlook. He said, "The mature female searches for a mate" (Al-Ahdal, 2012). He has a fear that she will "sully his honor, disgrace him and besmirch his reputation" (Al-Ahdal, 2012). Jasmine's mother treated her as her father and her brother. She has the same belief. She becomes the source of suffering for her daughter. Jasmine said:

Even my mother, who is the creature in all of existence closest to my heart, stares at my face intensely when I return from the University, searching for any trace of love. I realize that she hugs me on my return so she can smell my clothing and make sure I don't bear the scent of any unknown Billy goat. Every day she raises the same subject with me, "What did you do today?" and interrogates me about my relationships with male professors and classmates in the Faculty. Her heightened anxiety distresses me, but in spite of everything I forgive her and love her (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Jasmine described her mother as "the creature in all of existence closest to my heart" who is supposed to be the nearest person to her daughter. Here it becomes clear that the dominance and control are not only from males over women; some women also use them with other women. Women also get annoyed and obsessed with other women inside or outside the home. This is considered one of the concepts of hegemony. Some researchers proved that the hegemony is not only by man over woman, it is also by man over another man, or by woman over another woman. This was clear through the situation between Jasmine and her mother.



The hegemonic masculinity creates a belief that men are culturally privileged over women. This is what Wajdi Al-Ahdal clarified through the events of the novel. One of these situations which referred to this is when Ali said ".....She and Jasmine were sitting on one side and I on the other, leaving the place of honor for the paterfamilias" (Al-Ahdal, 2012); a phrase of "place of honor" here indicates to the status of Jasmine's father within the family, and the status of men in the society. It is considered a reference to the distinction between men and women in the society, and it proves the traditions in the Yemeni society that quell women.

There is a similar situation that carries the same connotation. It is as the inspector described, when he went to the apartment of Ali to ask about him. Ali's father was the one who received the inspector and brought him into the parlor. When Ali's father sat, he selected to sit at the center. As the inspector said, " He sat down at the center of the parlor and leaned back" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

2. Among the hegemonic manifestations are the situations that refer to the preference of parents for boys over girls in treatment and love. This was confirmed by Jasmine in her diary, but her mother denied that. Jasmine's Mother said "She mentioned that I favor her brothers over her. (This isn't true, I swear.)" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

### Hegemonic Masculinity and Patriarchal Culture in Yemeni Society

In his book, *The Social Cost of Domestic Violence Against Women in Yemen* (2006), Adel Al-Shargabi indicated that the family, the tribe, and the clan are the basis of the most influential social organizations in Yemen. These organizations are based on kinship connections and the patriarchal society. It is noticeable that these organizations resist changes, and it works to maintain affiliations and traditional loyalties. These organizations also resist the promotion of affiliation based on citizenship relations. For this reason, discrimination and social inequality in society that are based on gender and social affiliations persist (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 39).

Likewise, Al-Shargabi in another research "Violence and the Culture of Yemeni Society" asserted that Yemeni culture was formed through the interaction of several elements. The most important of these elements are the tribal values and it is known that tribal values and cultures express a culture of violence as the tribal cultures were characterized by constant conflict between different tribes. The tribal culture has a set of values that encourage the use of violent methods in resolving disputes and the most important of these values and cultures are masculinity, violence, strength, courage, revenge, etc. As a result of the tribal culture and social structure in Yemeni society, social relations were characterized by a patriarchal character. This matter created authoritarian personalities and did not create tolerant, democratic, or creative personalities, whether at the level of the family or the level of social organizations, as each individual became violent against the individual who are under his control (Al-Shargabi 32).





Socialization in Yemen, which often starts from the traditional family, reinforces patriarchal tendencies and a patriarchal society which means a society in which the individual submits to the direction of the group and individuals do not have independence. It is also noted that the culture in Yemen tends towards the distribution of power and authority for men and the exclusion of females from participating in the authority of the family and family decision-making processes. In Yemeni society, there is a huge bias for men (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 39).

In Yemen, the family relations in traditional families are characterized by hierarchy. As a result of this matter, the family members are committed to performing their tasks and roles according to patriarchal standards and without any controversy. Thus, the family's cultural orientation leans towards authoritarian and conservative values, as opposed to dialogic, and regenerative ones. These cultural orientations contribute to the formation of a defeatist and submissive personality among Yemeni women and preserve in them a sense of inferiority compared to men. Therefore, the self-image of a girl who grows up in a traditional family environment is an image dominated by feelings of weakness, inferiority, and powerlessness (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 40).

Al-Shargabi indicated that at a time when the world was striving to develop and calling for non-dealing with violence against nature and society, and replacing it with non-violent and cognitive mental methods, countries and societies had tried to adhere to democratic tendencies and principles of human rights. They also tried to recognize equality between members of society as individuals were prevented from using physical violence and its forms. These forms range from beating children to wars in some countries. Additionally, they restrict the right to use violence only to cases of imprisonment and execution by the government. Therefore, all forms of violence practiced by individuals and groups have become prohibited legally and internationally, whereas traditional societies still use all forms of violence until these days (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 43).

Although the political discourse in Yemen affirmed the state's commitment to democracy and human rights, the legislative regulations regulate the relationship between men, women, and spouses came as a response to the patriarchal traditional culture, which adopts a discriminatory view that distinguishes men over women and gives them a higher social status than women. Therefore, the Yemeni legislative system grants men absolute power over women whether they are wives, sisters, or daughters. It grants the man the right to make the decision of the marriage of his sister or daughter. It also grants him the right to approve or disapprove the work of his wife, sister, and daughter. Indeed Article No. (222) of the code of crimes, law, and penalties gives the man the right to kill a woman in cases related to honour (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 44). For instance, Article 232 of the Crimes and Penalties Law No. 12 of 1994 states that "if the husband kills his wife



and the one whom she commits adultery with when the two are caught in the act of adultery or the husband assaults them with the violation that leads to death or disability, there is no punishment for that, but the husband is punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year, or he is punished by a fine. The same ruling applies to whoever finds one of his ascendants, descendants, or sisters in the acts of adultery (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 47). This Article of the Yemeni Crimes and Penal Code seems to give the man the right to issue the execution sentence and perform it against a female relative who was caught in the act of adultery as well as whoever does this act with her, as this killing was sometimes done because of bad thoughts and there is no evidence to prove that crime of adultery has actually occurred (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 48).

Even for marriage in Yemen, it seems clear that the Personal Status Law views it as a contract whereby a man owns a woman's body. This concept is based on popular connotations that depend on tribal perceptions, so there are regions in Yemen that call the marriage contract by the term *Al-Milka*, which is derived from the concept of ownership (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 47). Al-Shargabi emphasized that the Yemeni legislation came to respond to the masculinity orientations but it did not come to respond to the provisions of Islamic Law based on equality and fairness between men and women.

Reem Mujahid referred to masculinity, and tribal society, as well as to the status of women in Yemen in her research "The Tribe and State in Yemen" (2022). She reported that the masculinity culture in Yemen limited the role of women under the pretext of protection for them and their belief that women bring shame. These factors made women face many problems within the society. Some of these problems are that they do not obtain good education, do not get suitable job opportunities, suffer inequalities between women and men, etc.

Mujahid asserted that the tribal ideology in Yemen is directed at males. The men represent their tribe everywhere, especially in public places. Most of the tribal leaders in Yemen are also men. This affected the status of women in Yemen (Mujahid, 2022, p 44). The tribal society in Yemen views women as the weaker sex who must depend on the man to protect her, whether this man is a custodian, or the man who is at the top of the tribal structure. Similarly, in masculinity and tribal society in Yemen, a woman lacks the advantage of protection and respect when the men of the family are absent, or if the woman decides to work outside the limits that the society sets for her as a woman (Mujahid, 2022, p 44).

As indicated previously, Yemeni society is considered a masculine and tribal society, and the authority is complete with the men. The social traditions also support this issue greatly, but Mujahid said that this matter differs in some regions. There are tribal women who live within the tribal structure that apply "real" tribal customs and traditions. They are treated better than women who live in regions that apply the laws of the modern state in Yemen. Women in tribal regions are considered actors within the tribe, i.e., within the



tribe, women enjoy great respect and attention and they are given special treatment. It is also forbidden to assault them in any way or to assault men who are accompanied by a woman even if he is a criminal because these behaviors are considered "shameful" according to the tribal custom. Likewise, women can manage conflicts that occur within the tribe, and they are considered protected during wars (Mujahid, 2022, p 42). Mujahid added that customs and traditions are in line with Islamic Law in meeting people's needs, but they differ in the penalties stipulated by customs and traditions (Mujahid, 2022, p 43).

The same point is discussed in the book *Arts of Popular Literature in Yemen*. It is indicated that in some Yemeni cities, men treat women as having intelligence deficiency, religion, and inheritance. They look at her as nakedness, for example, some men are ashamed to call a woman by her name in front of others, some call her by masculine name, and others call her by the name of her son. And when they talk about their wives or sisters, they name her *Albait* (home). They do not mention the woman's name because they think that they cover her up. These behaviors are considered as class privilege' attempts, or under the influence of the Ottomans or Persians (Al-Bardoni, 1998, p 34-35), whereas in the tribal regions and in the villages, they are ignorant of all these traditions. The man's contempt for the woman did not reach the point of lending her a name of man, and in these regions, women are treated with respect, they have their status (Al-Bardoni, 1998, p 34).

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2010) report, Yemeni society is dominated by traditions and inherited stereotyped customs which determine the system for both men and women. This led to domination and violence, considering that the man is the owner of the authority and the absolute decision. The prevailing patriarchal culture in Yemeni society played a major role in increasing the rates of gender-based violence, and this is due to the inherited stereotyped customs and traditions that contributed to this, starting with depriving women of some rights inside and outside the home (work, street, etc.). Women were restricted with outdated customs and traditions. For instance, women in some regions in Yemen do not contribute any opinion in any decision within the family. They are expected to only listen and obey what men decide, including choosing their life partner. In some regions, women are prevented from joining the university and work under the pretext of fear and under the pretext of mixing with men. In many regions, women are also deprived of their inheritance. They do all these practices under the concept of men's guardianship of women, especially the husband's guardianship over his wife, the father's guardianship over his daughters, the brother's guardianship over his sister, etc. In Yemeni society and many others, especially Arabic societies some men have thoughts and beliefs about the concept of guardianship which is mentioned in the noble verse {الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ} as complete dominance over women. They deal with women on the basis of this verse as they consider themselves to be in charge of women, but in an exaggerated manner that



exceeds what Allah the Almighty has commanded. There are also ideas and traditions rooted in the culture which carry within them the vision of ignorance that distinguishes male over female and which leads to minimizing and diminishing the female and her roles. In return, there is enlarging and maximizing for the male and his roles, where the right is always given to the patriarchal society to dominate the female from a young age (Ismail et al., 2010). The girl in Yemen does not have any sin other than that she was born a female. The patriarchal society's view of her as inferior confirms that she is helpless and passive (Ismail et al., 2010).

We can say that traditional education is not the only one that supports the authority of men and the inferiority of women, but the conflicting opinions of some religious scholars in their misinterpretation of religious rulings had a great impact on people's souls because religious awareness is the first guide to people's behavior in Yemen as a Muslim society. This is what happened with people who misunderstand the meaning of the verse that refers to the guardianship of men over women. Their interpretation of the verse came in two levels:

- i. The man controls all the family's decisions including the decisions of women, because the man's authority in society means that the woman is incompetent as she is deficient in reason, religion, and behavior in their view.
- ii. Controlling a woman's own decisions under the justification that she must obey her husband, father, brother, or the man who is considered her guardian because in the beliefs of the Yemeni society and other societies, a man is better than a woman in all aspects, especially in religious aspect (Ismail et al., 2010).

This understanding of guardianship made the woman think that taking any decision without the consent of the man is a legal contravene, even if this decision is in the interest of the family (Ismail et al., 2010). Here we can say guardianship has two interpretations: The first is the preference of the man over the woman, which is considered an honor to the man, and woman must be subordinate to the man. This interpretation is prevalent in Yemeni society, whereas the second interpretation is that guardianship is considered a mandate from Allah Almighty to the man, and therefore there is no preference for the man over the woman, especially in religion (Ismail et al., 2010).

### 3. Manifestations of Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic Masculinity in Yemeni society takes many forms, especially over women as it appears clearly through customary laws, customs, and traditions which can be considered unfair to women. Her femininity prevented her from getting rights in the patriarchal society which in some regions forced her to remain in the shadow, and the man created justifications for himself that give him the right of guardianship and dominance over women's decisions.



### 3.1. Underage Marriage in Yemen

All over the world, there are certain harmful traditional norms and practices, whether cultural or sometimes religious, which are considered normal but they undermine women's dignity. There are some practices committed by men over young girls and women who are incapable of resisting due to societal values placed on them. Underage marriage is one aspect of harmful traditional practice that is rooted in the traditional behavior, attitudes, and practices of people, which affects and violates the fundamental rights of women and girls (Nnadi, 2014, p 35).

Underage marriage, which is also sometimes called child marriage or early marriage, is a very common phenomenon in many countries affecting children who are as young as nine years old, especially girls. Ironically, very young girls are given in marriage to husbands who are as old as their fathers or grandfathers and they are commanded to remain there and be good wives. These girls are exposed to violence when they refuse sex, and they are violently assaulted sexually and end up being pregnant at a very young age. They have a great risk to their health. (Nnadi, 2014, p 35).

Child marriage is a human rights violation that has been increasingly recognized by international actors as an indicator of numerous global health issues. The Convention on the Rights of Child defines underage marriage or "child marriage" as marriage when one or both parties are under the age of 18, and most of the burden is assumed by young girls. The indicators illustrate that about one in five girls in the world are forced to get married under the age of 18. This rate has dramatically increased to about 40% of all girls in the developing world and the large rate is in the fragile states (Hunersen et al., 2021).

Yemen is considered one of the highest rates with underage marriage in the world. The phenomenon of underage marriage is not new in Yemen, but it has spread in recent years to a large extent due to the difficult economic conditions that Yemeni people suffer because of the war against Yemen, especially in rural areas. In 2017, a UNICEF study found that 32% of women aged 20–24 got married under the age of 18 though Yemen has agreed on efforts to end underage marriage and proposed a law in 2014 setting the minimum age of marriage at 18. That law was never officially ratified, leaving the legal age of marriage unclear (Hunersen et al., 2021).

There are many reasons for underage marriage. The first reason is that Yemeni society suffers from poverty and the absence of a source of income (Mansoor, 2020, p 99). The girls' families marry off their daughters to get money. In some cases, some families marry off their daughters in an early age to achieve economic gains or to build family ties for business benefits (Nnadi, 2014, p 36). Some parents also resort to marrying off their daughters at a young age because they believe that when a girl is married off early, she does



not have the opportunity to become a maiden. In Yemeni society, marriage is considered as a *sutrah* (covering) for the girl.

This was also confirmed by Al-Shargabi, when he said that most Yemeni families tend to marry their daughters at an early age. Through a field study he conducted in some cities in Yemen to find out why heads of families tend to marry off their daughters at a young age, Al-Shargabi pointed out that (%21,92) of the heads of families said that delaying the marriage of a girl might lead her to deviate from the values of honor, chastity, and purity, while others admitted that they wanted to get rid of the financial burdens of rearing a girl. There is some fear of spinsterhood of a girl, the belief that marriage is the destiny of a girl, and the desire for a girl to have a large number of children. In addition, there are family interests and family ignorance (Al-Shargabi, 2006, p 63).

Underage marriage is considered one of the most important causes of violence against women as referred to by Al-Shargabi in his book *Violence against Women in Yemen* (2003). The husband and wife have little experience due to their age, so the disputes between them increase and the husband abuses his wife physically and morally (Al-Shargabi, 2003, p 26).

In his novel, *Wajdi Al-Ahdal* indirectly mentioned the issue of girl early marriage in one situation. It is when Jasmine complains about her father's treatment and his annoyance because she is still unmarried and lives with him in the house. Jasmine said "My father has become my adversary and is openly hostile to me because I haven't married yet and still live in his home. He considers me a landmine that will explode beneath his feet at any moment if he neglects to supervise me" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

### 3.2. Women's Education in Yemen

The second manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in Yemen is depriving girls of education. In Yemen society, there is another kind of violence practiced against a large segment of society, the girls. Their guardians deprive them of education for reasons related mostly to customs and traditions.

In the seventeenth century, Yemen started to build schools in many cities such as Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz, while in the other cities old traditional learning exists in mosques by religious scholars or "Alfaqih" to teach religion, Arabic language, and calculations for everyday life. After the revolution in the north of Yemen in 1962, the number of schools began to increase especially in Sana'a, Taiz, and Al-Bayda. On the other hand, although the south of Yemen was suffering from British colonialization, the situation was better than that of the north in terms of education. During and after World War II, Britain invited some people to teach them in their universities and bring them back to Aden. This is reflected in many things, especially in education. After Yemeni unity, the schools started to expand even in the rural regions, and the country began to pay attention to education (Mansoor, 2020, p 98-99).



Yemen is considered one of the poorest countries in the world and in the Middle East. The researcher noticed that poverty was the primary cause of girls' dropping out of school because their fathers force them to work in the fields to help them. In contrast, there are good fathers who want their daughters to be educated, but they cannot pay the school or university expenses. In addition, there are fathers who prefer to educate their sons rather than their daughters, and this is considered one of the problems the girls suffer in Yemen.

There are families that educate their daughters until they will be able to read and write, then force them to stop their higher education (Mansoor, 2020, p 99).

There are many parents in Yemen who believe that there is no need to educate girls and women. They attribute this to several reasons. Among these reasons is the fear of moral corruption prevailing in society, and some parents believe that educating girls and women makes them strong and independent and this can cause trouble in their lives in the future, especially in their marriage life. Some parents believe that educating the girl delays her marriage or may prevent it at all. All of this reflects the patriarchal societal cultural orientation that tries to maintain the subordination of women to men (Ismail et al., 2010).

Some people believe that it is necessary to educate girls, despite the fact that opinions differ in terms of the appropriate level of education that women should reach. They agreed that learning how to read and write is sufficient for a girl, so she can pray and read the Holy Qur'an and help her children in their primary study. Some families allow their daughters to study up to the secondary level and then they are not allowed to enroll in the university, due to the absence of universities in the same places where the girl lives and the traditions of society that do not allow the girl to go to cities without Mahram (an accompanying relative) or even live there alone or in hostels to continue her education (Ismail et al., 2010).

Wajdi Al-Ahdal in *A Land without Jasmine* discussed the issue of education and university education with all realism. He revealed the tragedies of education that lead to the destruction of society and the loss of the most important denomination that relies on education for the advancement of society. He clarified that the outputs of education are a failure. He also discussed the reasons for the reluctance of parents to educate their children. Many of these reasons are referred to in chapter three, but here the researcher will discuss the point of view of Nasir Salim Al-Utmi who is the owner of the buffet in the faculty of science, and who is a simple and illiterate person. He was considered as the Faculty of Science's real archives. He criticized the situation of education describing that what is currently happening in universities is not related to reality and to knowledge in any way. He can predict what will happen to these students after they graduate. He said that "From my observation of simple things like these I can predict the unseen future, discern a trend, and understand how a



person strives to discover his fate. All science students who have chosen to wear bright yellow shirts, for example, have eventually ended up going crazy" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Nasir Salim Al-Utmi has ten children: four boys, and six girls. All of them were educated to the junior high level. He didn't encourage them to complete their education despite their intelligence. He said that "I've been granted ten kids: four boys and six girls. I've educated all of them till they finished the junior high school diploma. I've definitely not encouraged them to complete their education and have plucked from their minds any notion whatsoever of attending the University" (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

He also said "My kids are really bright, and that's why I've forbidden them to pursue a higher education because I fear the anger and vengeance of slackers against them. I'm not joking or exaggerating" (Al-Ahdal, 2008/2012). Because of the moral corruption that is widespread in the university, and the colleague's view of his female colleague with an inappropriate and disrespectful look, as the owner of buffet described, the young man treats his female colleague not as a student of knowledge, but as a female student who is looking for a romantic relationship within the university campus. He also referred to the hatred which spread among students and academics. The owner of buffet didn't encourage his children to continue their studies because of his complex and fear of what he saw inside the university.

He said:

Moral depravity is so endemic here that a man can almost smell it in the air! Prostitution rings scout the female students, harvesting an abundant crop, and brokers for "touristic marriage" offer their services in broad daylight. What's amazing is the way a male student gazes at a female classmate. It's an inappropriate stare devoid of respect. He relates to her not as a fellow student of science but as a student of copulation (Al-Ahdal, 2012).

Here the owner of buffet asserted the point of view of masculine society and Jasmine's father and brother when they said that the girl went to university not to get knowledge; she went to live a love story and make relationships with her male colleagues.

In fact, this view is misguided, as numerous girls pursue higher education to gain knowledge and secure careers. These girls are known for their high morals and modesty. They have achieved success and reached high positions, whether in their field of study or in their field of work. I think if Jasmine didn't disappear, she would have been one of them because she had great ambitions and she was striving to achieve them.





## CONCLUSION

This research was about hegemonic masculinity in Wajdi Al-Ahdal's novel *A Land Without Jasmine*. It discussed Hegemonic Masculinity and its manifestations, particularly in Yemeni society. It revealed several results related to Yemeni society and the novel. The author of the selected novel is Wajdi Al-Ahdal. Al-Ahdal, through his novel, tried to dismantle masculine authority. He criticized the patriarchal society in Yemen and tried to emerge the feminist voice by depicting the masculine society as aggressive, controlling, and dominant on female characters that appear subordinate and secondly ranked. The researcher reached many results such as:

- i. *A Land without Jasmine* is full of events that indicate that Yemeni society is a male-dominated society.
- ii. Yemeni Society is a male-dominated society and the system that prevails in it is the patriarchal system. The males in Yemeni society are considered dominant. They have the authority and they have the right to make decisions, especially those related to women.
- iii. The dominant system in Yemen is the patriarchal system, and the decisions that are taken in the society are the decisions of the tribe.
- iv. Most of the suffering of men is because of social tradition. The structure of the Yemeni family is still a traditional and patriarchal structure, so its methods of upbringing are dominated by a predominantly traditional character. This upbringing works to firm the traditional values that contribute to promoting a masculine culture and the idea of male preference over female. It also reinforces the idea of hegemony and violence and the inferior view of women.
- v. Yemen is considered one of the highest rates with underage marriage in the world.
- vi. Hegemony is not only by man over woman, it is also by man over another man, or by woman over another woman. This was clear through the situation between Jasmine and her mother.

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