

## Research Article

# Representations of Feminism and Strategies for Defending Male Hegemony in a Patriarchal Context: The Moderating Effect of Sociodemographic and Attitudinal Variables

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## Abstract

Many African societies apply patriarchy, an oppressive, authoritarian and discriminatory social system in which power rests with men, for regulating gender relations. However, with the socio-structural evolution of these societies, new ideological currents gradually change the mores of the citizens, among which feminism. This ideology aims for more equitable relations between the sexes, which implicitly means questioning the model of patriarchal societies and contesting male domination; hence its potential danger and the defense strategies that men could adopt to mitigate or even annihilate its impact. This research is interested not only in these strategies, but also in the factors which are their catalysts; a question which, to the best of our knowledge, is little explored in the African patriarchal context specifically. In this vein, the hypotheses it tests propose that, in the African patriarchal context, men's sociodemographic characteristics, their feeling that male hegemony is threatened and their adherence to the patriarchal system interact with representations of feminism to explain the defensive strategies they develop to preserve their hegemony consecrated by patriarchy. To test these hypotheses, a survey was conducted among 554 male participants residing in the towns of Maroua and Dschang (Cameroon). Their ages range from 19 to 67 years ( $M= 24.61$ ;  $SD= 7.10$ ). They were administered various measurement scales relating to representations of feminism ( $\alpha=.75$ ), feeling of threat to male hegemony ( $\alpha=.70$ ), defense strategies ( $\alpha=.76$ ) and support to patriarchy ( $\alpha=.76$ ). The data collected provides empirical support for the hypotheses of the study.

## Keywords

Representation of Feminism, Patriarchy, Male Hegemony, Perception of Threat

## 1. Introduction

Historically, the biological differences between men and women have contributed to reinforcing representations of the psychological and social differences between the sexes. The notion of gender makes it possible to go beyond this traditional biological opposition to take an interest in social constructions that are not exclusively biological of “masculine” and “femi-

nine” as well as the relationships and hierarchies they create [4]. In fact, systemic inequalities that disadvantage women and advantage men are visible around the world [14]. They materialize the sexual stratification of cultures and societies in which women generally appear subject to male domination, so that they are considered in every way, compared to their male

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**Received:** 30 January 2024; **Accepted:** 12 February 2024; **Published:** 27 February 2024



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counterparts, as nothing better than “the second sex”, the subordinate sex (see [20]). In the African context specifically, despite the progress made with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), women still face social inequalities in various areas [8, 30], including those relating to political power and authority, economic resources and decision-making [14]. These are often enshrined in law or custom [29].

To explain the gender power differential, the literature has paid particular attention to patriarchy; a sociopolitical system which professes that men are inherently dominant and endowed with the right to dominate, to rule over the weak and to maintain that domination by various means, especially over women; hence the birth of protesting socio-political and ideological currents, whose aim is to challenge this domination which constitutes the source of gender inequalities [26]. This is the case with feminism. Feminism is defined as a broad spectrum of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social gender equality [23]. It is also a set of fights for the rights of women and their freedom to think and act [34]. Its theoretical project makes it possible to deconstruct androcentric official knowledge in order to reconstruct it taking into account women’s realities [24]. Feminist ideology is built on beliefs that patriarchy plays an important role in gender notions and that practices and some treatment of women is due to the asymmetrical power relations between men and women produced by patriarchy [5]. In fact, there are many routine ways in which gender inequalities are produced and reproduced in various sectors of social life: formal and informal discrimination, unconscious prejudices, gender relations that exclude women, etc. [16]. However, with the social changes that push Africans to migrate from a traditional societal model to a modern model, we observe that African women are no longer passive in the face of this situation, since they are increasingly part of logics of resistance [9], including feminism which works to move towards gender parity. Its fights are centered on the free disposal of one’s body, equality in the education of children, the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, street harassment, equal pay and access to jobs responsibility in organizations and administrations [34]. From the perspective of this ideology, to claim is to confront; it is refusing to comply with norms, rules and decisions, created and imposed by the cultural, political, moral or religious order which varies according to the context. This implicitly means that this movement challenges the model of patriarchal societies and therefore challenges male domination [22].

Even pro-feminist men committed to combating sexist and violent behavior against women widely recognize that one of the most important challenges in advancing this cause is the negotiation of male privilege [6], since this violence is rooted in the logic of patriarchy [5]. We observe, in fact, the rise, in certain societies, of anti-feminist movements, defined as a counter-movement, or a set of attitudes whose objectives are to oppose the entry of women into the public sphere, the

reorganization of the private sphere, the control that women have over their bodies and women’s rights in general [27]. The related literature, compiled mainly in a Western and Asian context [22], highlights contemporary forms of resistance to efforts to achieve gender equality [8, 15] or on the persistence of patriarchy [3], notably by caricaturing feminists as immature and irrational extremists and by reproducing the representations of women in terms of appearance, intelligence or promiscuity [22]. It is in this wake that both misogyny and anti-feminism are located, which are very present in cyberspace to counter feminist activism, which finds a place of great exposure there [22]. According to this author, if the first refers to general attitudes and behaviors towards women, the second is a response to feminism conceived as a political project. They have in common the goal of controlling women’s thoughts and bodies in order to maintain the patriarchal system. In the African context, we know little not only about the strategies that men develop to minimize the consequences of feminism on the hierarchical relations between the sexes and therefore preserve their hegemony consecrated by the functioning of patriarchal societies, but also about the socio-demographic and sociostructural factors likely to explain their use of the said strategies. However, due to considerable variation between human populations in various domains [28], each societal context must be taken into account in the understanding of societal phenomena; hence the fact that this study is devoted to this poorly documented aspect of literature in an African context specifically.

### 1.1. Feminism: A Threatening Ideology for Patriarchy

In most societies, the domination of men over women is enshrined in customs, religion and even law [29]. In this regard, the social dominance theory proposes that men have a disproportionate power compared to women at the political, social, economic and military levels regardless of the context (gender system; [35]). This system is almost universal, as it is predominant in all human cultures and even animal species [37]. Many societies operate on this unequal system known as patriarchy [21], which gives privileges to men. It results from a process of gendered socialization in all areas of social, economic, ideological, cultural, political and spiritual life. It is a social and ideological construction that considers men superior to women [32]. They hold authority over women, children and property [39]. Patriarchy encourages male leadership, dominance and power. It is a system in which women are subject to economic dependence, violence, domestication and the peripheries of decision-making [1]. It imposes structures that categorize certain types of work as “men’s” or “women’s” [33]. It is observed that almost all human cultures have institutionalized some type of “male privilege” which not only presupposes male superiority in the mindset of men, and women as well, but is also experienced in all facets of daily life, from the bedroom, to educational opportunities and

career choices, to employment opportunities, to property, to social security, to political participation and even to religious rights and obligations [38].

Many African societies are predominantly patriarchal [2]. In the patriarchal system, men and women behave, think and aspire differently, because they have been taught to think about masculinity and femininity in ways that condition difference [38]. This system affirms or accepts that men have, or should have, a different set of qualities and characteristics (strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, competitiveness, etc.) than women (attention, education, love, timidity, obedience, etc.) [38]. These feminine characteristics are considered fundamental for the durability of marriage, in particular because they have an impact in the economic and social spheres. On the institutional level, the inequalities between men and women are manifest through a few facts, including the function of head of the family (the husband is the head of the family, the woman adopts his name when she marries), polygamy (the right to be polygamous is an exclusively male privilege) [29]. Alongside the law, custom enshrines the superiority of men over women. The same is true of religion, be it Christianity or Islam. Patriarchal ideologues often exaggerate the biological differences between men and women, claiming that men have the masculine, dominant and therefore superior roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine roles [25]. This ideology is so powerful that “men are usually able to obtain the apparent consent of the very women they oppress” [38]. Their dominance occurs through various institutions, such as the church and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s weaknesses and their subordination to men [1].

The persistence of patriarchy leads to the analysis of the resistances that occur against this system which governs gender relations [3]. Women’s movements in general, and feminism in particular, have strongly criticized the attitudes, practices, and cultures among men that sustain gender inequality. This is a low status group (women) trying to defend itself, gain more rights or just exist. In this vein, [18] have analyzed feminist resistance. In some cases, it is a question of individual strategies to, for example, keep one’s job and personal income, despite family policies encouraging women to devote themselves entirely to children and domestic life, or the practices of work like the 1988 Coordination of Nurses or even feminist collectives fighting for parity in politics or the extension of the right to abortion [9]. The MeToo international movement, with the Weinstein affair in 2017, has enabled women to support each other, have the aggressors judged and set up chains of solidarity through experiences that resemble and recognize each other [3]. This author points out that patriarchy triggers, in spite of itself, a resistance of the feminine against the masculine; a resistance which could constitute a danger for it. From this perspective, feminism is an ideology that disturbs and therefore arouses sometimes angry reactions. It is accused in particular of threatening the divine or natural order and of weakening masculinity, due to

the fact that it calls men’s domination into question [3], in the idea that the evolution of women’s status would necessarily lead to a decline in men’s status.

## 1.2. The Present Study: Perceived Threat to Male Hegemony and Strategies for the Preservation of Male Power

The literature shows that when patterns of inequality and injustice change, individuals and groups, especially those advantaged by the status quo, resist [15]. Currents like masculinism perceive equality between the sexes as a threat [7]. According to [12], a specialist in antifeminism, masculinism is a current of antifeminism based on the discourse according to which there would be a crisis of masculinity, which would be caused by women and feminists. In this vein, gender equality is seen as an affective, psychological and existential threat to men; hence the need for them to rearm themselves in the face of this phenomenon [11]. It is important to note that masculinism is a current of thought that has been gaining ground over the years, both in terms of ideas and action. It unfolds according to a reactionary logic, the aim of which, conscious or not, would be to revalorize a masculine condition that has been undermined. To achieve their ends, anti-feminists use discursive strategies such as disinformation or recourse to nostalgia for the “good old days” and the natural order [13]. Indeed, the logics behind anti-feminism and misogyny are that society has been destroyed by feminists and men have been hurt by women. This is why supporters of these movements seek the restoration of male capacities and patriarchy to save men from a “fictitious crisis” [22].

Resistance to efforts to advance gender equality is a common feature of social life [15]. Resistance is an inevitable, though undesirable, response to efforts at progressive social change. A typical feature of the backlash is the desire of some proponents to return to aspects of an idealized past in which structural inequality was normalized [10]. Members of privileged groups therefore often become angry and more defensive when their privilege is challenged [15]. In China, for example, with the renewed vitality of Confucianism and its amplification by state propaganda, women who publicly declare themselves to be feminists are seen as challenging the sexual values, norms and morals of Confucian culture. According to [22], when feminists promote economic independence and encourage women to stop seeing marriage as a vital necessity, they are blamed by antifeminists for transgressing the conventional sexual order. In fact, for them, the awakening of feminism represents a threat to male hegemony.

Backlash and resistance to gender equality take common forms, including: denial of the problem, denial of responsibility, inaction, appeasement, co-option and repression [15]. Resistance can be individual or collective, formal or informal, and reluctance against gender equality measures comes more often from members of the privileged group (men) than from the disadvantaged group (women). Resistance therefore

ranges from passive blocking techniques, which seek to maintain the status quo, to strategies aimed at minimizing or co-opting efforts for change, to active and aggressive opposition in order to restore the old order [19, 31, 36]. Work that has looked at this resistance has been carried out in Western contexts; excluding African contexts where patriarchal logics are particularly pronounced [2]. Moreover, the elements of resistance evoked are general and do not dwell particularly on the strategies of defense against the fight of feminists; hence the interest of this study for the individual strategies developed by men against women in order to maintain their hegemony in the African context; little studied in the specialized literature, unlike in the West or Asia [22]. From this perspective, since feminism is an ideology challenging gender inequalities, and therefore asymmetrical relationships between groups, it seems relevant to study the strategies developed by men to maintain the status quo.

## 2. Hypotheses

The present study tests several hypotheses of moderation of the link between representations of feminism and defensive strategies against the threat to male hegemony. Firstly, it proposes that in an African patriarchal context, the combinatorial interactions between sociodemographic variables and representations of feminism significantly explain the defensive strategies developed by men to preserve their hegemony. In other words, men's level of education (H1), religious obedience (H2), marital status (H3) and age (H4) moderate the link between their representations of feminism and their use of defensive strategies against threat to male hegemony. Secondly, it predicts that in a patriarchal context, the feeling of threat to male hegemony induced by feminist ideology significantly moderates the link between the representations of this ideology and the defense strategies against this threat (H5). In the same vein, this research proposes that adherence to the patriarchal system has an impact on the relationship between representations of feminism and the defense strategies developed by men to preserve their hegemony (H6). Given the structure of the patriarchal system, it is expected that a positive interaction between adherence to men's institutional power and representations of feminism is positively associated with defense strategies observed in men (H6a) and that adherence to the women's inherent inferiority as well as adherence to gendered domestic roles, each combined with representations of feminism, explain defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (H6b and H6c).

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

The participants of this study are five hundred and fifty-four (N= 554) male individuals, selected from the towns of

Dschang and Maroua (Cameroon). They are aged between 19 and 67 years (M= 24.61; SD= 7.10). 18% of them have secondary education, while 82% have university education. They are Muslims (15.90%) and Christians (84.10%), from the ten (10) regions of Cameroon. While 12% of them are married, 88% are single.

### 3.2. Material and Procedure

The data for the present study were collected using four self-administered psychometric scales, three of which (03) were constructed and validated for the purposes of the study. These instruments evaluate four (04) psychological constructs: representations of feminism, feeling of threat to male hegemony, defense strategies and adherence to patriarchy. All these instruments of data collection include a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Sociodemographic informations such as participants' educational level, marital status, religious affiliation and age were also collected.

#### *The measure of representations of feminism*

It is made up of six (06) right-coded items (e.g. "Feminism pushes women to disobey their husbands.") The analysis of the reliability of this scale demonstrates an acceptable level of reliability (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.75$ ;  $\alpha=.75$ ). The confirmatory analysis reports a modest adjustment of the internal structure of this scale to the empirical data ( $\chi^2= 99.31$ ;  $df= 20$ ;  $CFI=.90$ ;  $SRMR=.04$ ).

#### *The measure of the feeling of threat to male hegemony*

Its aim is to capture the feelings of threat that men develop when their power is undermined by the rise of feminist ideology. It is a measure made up of four (04) right-coded items (e.g. "The fact of knowing that African women can emancipate themselves scares me.") This measure has acceptable reliability (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.70$ ;  $\alpha=.70$ ). Its confirmatory unifactorial structure reveals an adequate level of adjustment ( $\chi^2= 2.223$ ;  $df= 2$ ;  $CFI=.99$ ;  $SRMR=.013$ ).

#### *The measure of defense strategies against the threat to masculine hegemony*

This scale aims to measure the strategies adopted by men to combat the threat to male hegemony. It is made up of four (04) right-coded items (e.g. "To avoid having a feminist wife, I avoid having relationships with women who belong to associations defending women's rights.") The measurement of the estimated reliability of this instrument reveals an acceptable index (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.76$ ;  $\alpha=.76$ ). Structural validity indices support an adequate fit of this measure to empirical data ( $\chi^2= 15.40$ ;  $df= 5$ ;  $CFI=.98$ ;  $SRMR=.02$ ).

#### *The measure of patriarchy*

Its aim is to evaluate individuals' positioning in relation to the patriarchal system, considered in this research as a contextual variable. This measure comprising nine (09) items is an adaptation of the three-dimensional scale developed by [40]. The first dimension assesses support for men's institutional power, with four (04) positive items (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.74$ ;  $\alpha=.74$ ). Item 2 proposes that: "a man must be at the head of a

company”. The second dimension assesses support for women’s inherent inferiority, with three (03) positive items (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.72$ ;  $\alpha=.72$ ). For example, item 1 states: “Banks should not extend credit to women.” The third dimension measures adherence to gendered domestic roles with two (02) positive items ( $\alpha=.73$ ). One of the items proposes that: “a man must control the household finances”. The overall scale benefits from acceptable reliability (McDonald  $\Omega/\omega=.75$ ;  $\alpha=.77$ ). Its three-dimensional structure adequately fits the data collected ( $\chi^2= 27.45$ ;  $df= 8$ ;  $CFI=.90$ ;  $SRMR=.05$ ).

### 3.3. Administration and Procedure for Filling Questionnaires

Participants were invited individually to take part in the survey. After presenting them with the objective of the study, they agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. Their task was to carefully read and complete the administered self-assessment questionnaires. They were first required to provide identification or sociodemographic information, indicating their level of education, religious obedience, marital status and age. This socio-demographic information, which places the participant in a specific membership category, was coded (level of education: 1= secondary and 2= higher; Religious Obedience: 1= Christian and 2= Muslim; Marital Status: 1= married and 2= single; Age: 1= young and 2= adult). Secondly, they had to express their point of view individually and honestly by checking a single number corresponding to their support or not for the trait evaluated by each item of the self-administered scales. From the point of view of research ethics, guarantees were given to them regarding the use that would be made of the information they provided as part of the study.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

At the end of the survey, 554 participants were registered. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS.27 and SPSS-AMOS.23 software. The first served as a tool to determine the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation,

median, minimum and maximum score, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and its p-value) and the correlation indices (r, p-value). The interaction terms between the variables were created using SPSS.27, notably in the analysis of the multiple regression model. Two multiple regression models with interaction effects between variables were created. This is the integrative multiple linear regression model of demographic variables, representations of feminism and defense strategies, and the integrative regression model of variations in patriarchy, representations of feminism and defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. The multiple linear regression indices, including standardized and unstandardized coefficients, as well as the prediction coefficient (R2) were calculated and presented.

The second software made it possible to schematize and evaluate the moderating relationships between the socio-demographic variables, the feeling of threat, the dimensions of adherence to patriarchy, the representations of feminism and the defense strategies developed by men against the threat to male hegemony. The interaction relationships were created and their effects on the defense strategies were analyzed and interpreted based on the factor loadings. The latter indicate the direction taken by defense strategies when interaction terms are introduced into multiple regression models. These factor loadings test the moderation hypotheses. The level of fit of the models to the data is estimated from indices such as  $\chi^2$ , the comparative fit index (CFI) which must be between .90 and 1 to attest to an acceptable fit and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA<.08) [17].

## 4. Results

The preliminary results presented in the foreground preferably use descriptive tables (see Table 1 for example), while the results testing the research hypotheses preferably use synthetic tables and diagrams (see Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 1 and 2) modeling interaction relationships between variables.

*Preliminary analyzes*

**Table 1.** Descriptive and correlational statistics.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Defence Strategy	†									
2. Representation of Feminism	.17***	†								
3. Feeling of threat	.47***	.35***	†							
4. Adherence to Men’s Institutional Power	.42***	.28***	.29***	†						
5. Adherence to Women’s Inherent Inferiority	.30***	.20***	.18***	.33***	†					
6. Adherence to Gendered Domestic Roles	.23***	.30***	.15***	.37***	.26***	†				

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Level of Education	-.005	.06	-.02	.02	.02	.02	†			
8. Religion	-.09	-.02	-.02	-.008	-.10*	-.10*	.10*	†		
9. Matrimonial Status	-.005	.01	.03	-.09*	.01	.05	.13**	.15***	†	
10. Age	-.09	.01	-.03	-.06	-.11	-.17***	-.09*	-.16***	-.50***	†
Mean	23.48	15.3	14	16.09	8.09	7.55	†	†	†	†
Median score	14	21	14	14	10.5	7	†	†	†	†
Standard-deviation	7.56	5.25	5.55	5.40	4.11	3.39	†	†	†	†
Shapiro-Wilk	.98	.986	.977	.982	.92	.95	.103	.43	.377	.23
p Value of Shapiro-Wilk	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Minimum	6	4	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1
Maximum	42	28	28	28	21	14	2	2	2	2

Note: Code for sociodemographic variables: Level of education (1= secondary; 2= Higher), Religious obedience (1= Christian; 2= Muslim), Marital status (1= Married; 2= Single), Age (1= young; 2= adult); \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

Preliminary results indicate that on variables such as the feeling of threat to male hegemony, adherence to men's institutional power, adherence to gendered domestic roles and defense strategies, participants presented scores above the median score (See Table 1). These trends reveal that they exhibit the psychological trait being assessed. On the other hand, on variables such as representations of feminism and adherence to women's inherent inferiority, trends are relatively below the median score (See Table 1). Pearson coefficients (r) indicate correlation indices between the constructs evaluated. The objective is to verify the levels of significance of the relationships between the constructs on the one hand

and between these constructs and the sociodemographic variables on the other hand. First, the results obtained indicate that the defense strategies deployed by men in situations of threat to male hegemony are positively and significantly (p<.001) associated with the feeling of threat, representations of feminism, adherence to men's institutionalized power, adherence to gendered domestic roles and adherence to women's inherent inferiority (See Table 1). Second, the sociodemographic variables are negatively and non-significantly (p>.05) associated with defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (See Table 1).

#### 4.1. Testing Research Hypotheses: Models for Analyzing Interaction Effects Between Sociodemographic Variables, Representations of Feminism and Defense Strategies

**Table 2.** Interaction between representations of feminism and sociodemographic variables (sex, age, marital status, educational level) in the explanation of defense strategies.

Model	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	VS-MPR*	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
(Intercept)	74.96	23.09		3.25	.001	44.24	29.59	120.33
RF	-2.49*	1.05	-3.39*	-2.36	.01	4.98	-4.57	-.42
LE	-29.60***	9.16	-.67***	-3.23	.001	42.31	-47.61	-11.60
Re	-2.51 (ns)	2.28	-.16 (ns)	-1.10	.27	1.04	-7	1.97
SM	2.07 (ns)	3.65	.12 (ns)	.57	.57	1	-5.10	9.24
Age	-4.06 (ns)	5.10	-.17 (ns)	-.80	.43	1	-14.10	5.96
RF*LE (H1)	1.43***	.44	3.98***	3.26	.001	46.59	.57	2.29

Model	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	VS-MPR*	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
RF* Re (H2)	.02 (ns)	.09	.07 (ns)	.26	.79	1	.08	1.07
RF*MS (H3)	.14 (ns)	.16	.40 (ns)	.87	.38	1	.30	3.01
RF* Age (H4)	.02 (ns)	.21	.03 (ns)	.09	.93	1	.30	3.01

Model Summary - Strategy of Defense

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	P
H <sub>1</sub>	.27	.07***	.06***	5.39	.07***	4.82	9	544	<.001

Note: H= Research hypothesis; RF= Representation of Feminism; LE= Level of Education; Re= Religion; MS= Matrimonial Status; \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

The introduction of sociodemographic variables (participants' level of education, religion, marital status and age) into the multiple regression model and the activation of interaction terms between these variables and the representation of feminism make it possible to explain the use of defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. First, the results indicate that participants' representation of feminism, level of education, religious affiliation and age do not explain the use of defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (See Table 2). On the other hand, marital status positively explains the use of defense strategies. Second, the introduction of interaction terms

between sociodemographic variables and representations of feminism indicates that level of education and representations of feminism interact positively and significantly (p<.001) explain the use of defense strategies. In the same vein, religious obedience and representations of feminism have a positive and non-significant interaction effect on defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (See Table 2). The results also indicate that the introduction of interaction terms between marital status and representations of feminism, and between age and representations of feminism induces positive effects of these interacting variables on defense strategies.

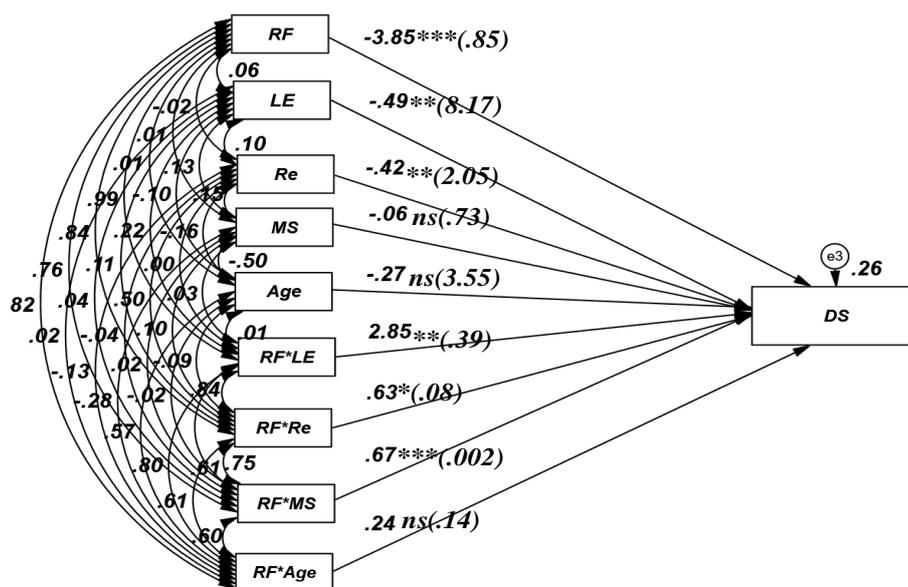


Figure 1. Model of interaction effects between representations of feminism and sociodemographic variables (sex, age, marital status, educational level) in the explanation of defense strategies.

Note: RF=Representation of feminism; FT= Feeling of Threat; LE= Level of Education; MS= Matrimonial status; Re= Religious obedience; DS= Defense Strategies. The elements in the brackets are the standard error; ns= non-significant relation; X<sup>2</sup>= 7037.328; df= 45; p<.001; CFI= 1; TLI= 1; \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

The sociodemographic variables introduced into the model in Figure 1 interact positively with representations of feminism. In fact, the interaction between the level of education and representations of feminism significantly ( $p < .01$ ) induces the recourse to defense strategies against the feeling of threat to male hegemony. Likewise, the interaction between religion and representations of feminism significantly ( $p < .05$ ) explains the defense strategies. In the same direction, the combination of marital status with representations of feminism

significantly ( $p < .001$ ) induces the use of defense strategies. The interaction between age and representations of feminism does not significantly ( $p > .05$ ) explain these strategies (See Figure 1). These results allow us to conclude that sociodemographic variables such as level of education, religious obedience, marital status and age positively moderate the relationship between representations of feminism and recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony.

### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing of the Interaction Model Between the Feeling of Threat, Adherence to Patriarchy, Representations of Feminism and Defense Strategies

**Table 3.** Interaction between representations of feminism, feeling of threat to male hegemony and adherence to patriarchy in the explanation of the recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony.

Model	B	SE	B	T	p	VS-MPR	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
(Intercept)	4.71	1.97		2.39	.01	5.27	.84	8.59
RF	-.13 (ns)	.08	-.18 (ns)	-1.61	.10	1.53	-.30	.03
FT	.05 (ns)	.12	.05 (ns)	.49	.61	1	-.17	.29
AMIP	.11 (ns)	.12	.11 (ns)	.95	.34	1.00	-.12	.35
AWII	.61***	.15	.45***	4.14	<.001	915.22	.32	.91
AGDR	.29 (ns)	.20	.18 (ns)	1.44	.14	1.30	-.10	.69
RF*FT (H5)	.01**	.004	.47**	2.99	.003	21.83	.005	.02
RF*AMIP (H6a)	.006 (ns)	.005	.20 (ns)	1.22	.22	1.10	-.004	.01
RF*AWII (H6b)	-.01**	.006	-.40**	-3.02	.003	23.40	-.02	-.006
RF*AGDR (H6c)	-.007 (ns)	.008	-.15 (ns)	-.95	.34	1.00	-.02	.008

#### Model Summary – Strategy of Defense

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	p
H <sub>1</sub>	.59	.36***	.34***	4.50	.36	33.26	9	544	<.001

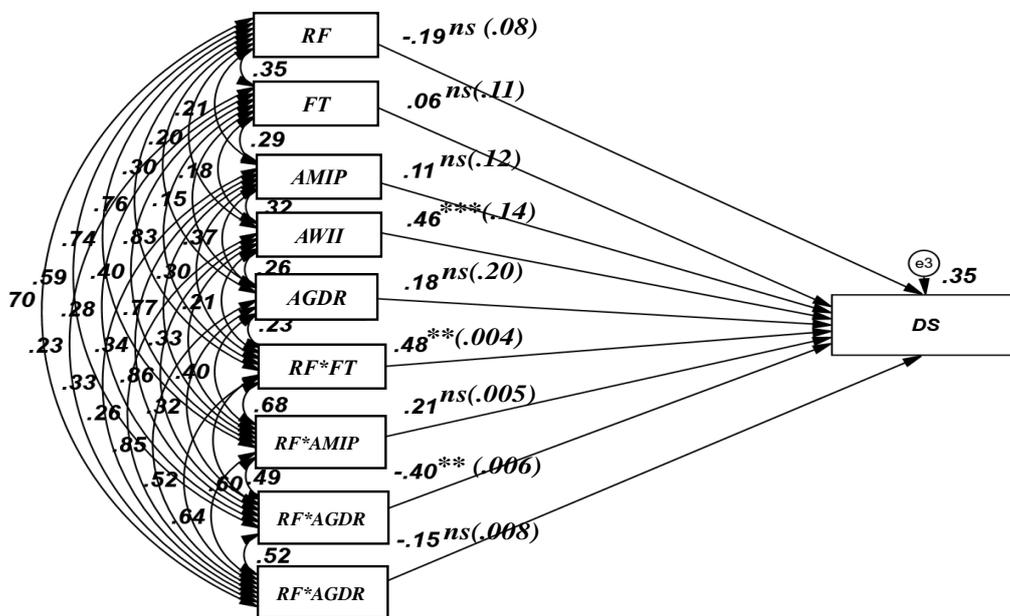
Note: H= Research hypothesis; RF= Representation of feminism; FT= Feeling of Threat; AMIP= Adherence to Men’s Institutional Power; AWII= Adherence to Women’s Inherent Inferiority; AGDR= Adherence to Gendered Domestic Roles; ns= non-significant; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The results show that representations of feminism have a negative and non-significant impact on recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. At the same time, the feeling of threat explains positively and not significantly the participants’ use of defense strategies. The introduction into the model of the interaction term between the feeling of threat and the representation of feminism interacts

positively and explains significantly ( $p < .001$ ) the activation of defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. This means that the feeling of threat observed in men significantly moderates the link between representations of feminism and defense strategies. Likewise, support for men’s institutional power interacts positively and insignificantly with representations of feminism and these two variables are

insignificantly linked to defense strategies. Adherence to women’s inherent inferiority and representations of feminism negatively explain the use of defense strategies in a non-significant interaction ( $p>.05$ ); which means that an increase of one standard deviation in the interaction effect between these two variables creates an insignificant asym-

metric variation in defense strategies. We also observe that the introduction of adherence to gendered domestic roles in the model and its interaction with representations of feminism negatively explain defense strategies in a non-significant asymmetric interaction (See [table 3](#)).



**Figure 2.** Model of interaction effects between feeling of threat to male hegemony, patriarchy and representations of feminism in explaining the use of defense strategies.

Note: RF= Representation of feminism; FT= Feeling of Threat; AMIP= Adherence to Men’s Institutional Power; AWII= Adherence to Women’s Inherent Inferiority; AGDR= Adherence to Gendered Domestic Roles; DS= Defense Strategies. The elements in the brackets are the standard error; ns= non-significant relation;  $X^2 = 7037.328$ ;  $df = 45$ ;  $p < .001$ ; CFI= 1; TLI= 1; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The model in [Figure 2](#) illustrates the relationships and interaction effects between the variables. Specifically, the feeling of threat positively and significantly moderates the link between representations of feminism and defensive strategies. This means that the feeling of threat interacts positively with representations of feminism; which induces a statistically significant relationship between representations of feminism and defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (See [Figure 2](#)). Support for men’s institutional power and representations of feminism interact positively. This interaction induces a statistically insignificant increase in recourse to defense strategies. These results indicate that the explanation of the use of defensive strategies must take into consideration the interactions between the representations of feminism, feeling of threat and adherence to the men’s institutionalized power. The interaction effects between representations of feminism, adherence to women’s inherent inferiority and adherence to gendered domestic roles should not be taken into consideration in explaining men’s recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony (See [Figure 2](#)).

### 5. Discussion

The objective of the present research was to analyze the moderating effects of the sociodemographic variables, feeling of threat to male hegemony and adherence to patriarchy on the link between representations of feminism and recourse to defense strategies to protect male hegemony. The results indicate interactions between sociodemographic variables and representations of feminism and their effects on recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. Concretely, the level of education, religious obedience, marital status and age interact positively with representations of feminism; and the whole positively explains defense strategies. These results provide empirical support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4. It was also observed that the feeling of threat to male hegemony and representations of feminism interact positively; indicating a significant interaction effect on defense strategies; which is in the same direction as hypothesis H5. The results also provide support for hypothesis H6a, because support for men’s institutional power positively

and significantly moderates the link between representations of feminism and recourse to defense strategies against the threat to male hegemony. Adherence to women's inherent inferiority and gendered domestic roles does not positively and significantly moderate this relationship; thus rejecting hypotheses H6b and H6c. It emerges from all these observations that individuals' sociodemographic characteristics, the feeling of threat to male hegemony and support for men's institutionalized power are factors which incline individuals to resort to strategies for preserving male hegemony.

The results of this research show that men have a negative representation of feminism; which means that they are against moving towards gender parity [34]. They also have a feeling of threat to male hegemony [7, 11]. Indeed, for these men, the fact of knowing that the African woman can emancipate scares them. Moreover, they are afraid that feminism diminishes the privileges that society grants them; thus placing themselves in the logic of antifeminism observed in both Western and Asian contexts [22]. They therefore adhere to the patriarchal system. This means that they adhere to the idea that men are superior to women and holds authority over them as much as over children and property [32, 39]. This can be justified by the socialization process, if we refer to [15] who argue that boys and men are socialized – in families, among peers, through the media – to adopt sexist conceptions of gender and take certain forms of privilege or rights for granted. Therefore, in response to the perceived threat, males develop defensive strategies [15]. For example, in order not to have a feminist wife, the latter avoid having relations with, on the one hand, women who belong to associations for the defense of women's rights; and on the other hand, with those who study for a long time, more likely to be aware of their rights and therefore to challenge their authority, according to popular Cameroonian imagery. However, we note that when the feeling of threat is not strong, men do not really deploy defensive strategies. This reveals that not all men are afraid of feminism, despite having a negative representation of this ideology.

## 6. Limits of the Study and Perspectives

Despite the contribution of the present study to the literature on the defensive strategies implemented by men to minimize the impact of feminist ideology on male hegemony, it has a limitation, related to the sites where the sample was selected. Although its size is an asset, it is made up only of Cameroonian men residing in the cities of Maroua and Dschang. It is therefore not representative of the African population in general. It is therefore difficult to transpose these results to the African population or to specific groups that are poorly represented here. This is why other studies would be necessary in order to have a better representation of the African population.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the moderating effect of the feeling of threat to male hegemony on the link between the representations of feminism and the defensive strategies developed by men to protect male hegemony. The results testing the moderation hypothesis showed that the feeling of threat positively and significantly regulates the effect of the representations of feminism on the defensive strategies defined to protect male hegemony. They support the hypothesis defended in the present research and reveal that whenever there are efforts to progress towards gender justice, there are individual and collective, formal and informal resistances [15]. Knowing the typical forms, dynamics and origins of resistance is valuable, as understanding them strengthens efforts to reduce gender inequalities.

## Data Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this research will be made available by the author, without any undue reservation.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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