NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

Promoting Gender Participation in Wool and Mohair Industry in Lesotho: The study of Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association, Semonkong, Lesotho

by

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation submitted to the National University of Lesotho is my own original work and has not been submitted for any degree or other qualification at any other university or institution. I affirm that all sources of information used in the dissertation have been properly acknowledged and referenced. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation, as well as all substantive contributions by others, have been duly credited.

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of wool and mohair industry in promoting gender participation in the industry. The aim was to understand the extent and nature of male and female involvement, exploring the stages of participation, livelihood improvement, policies and initiatives and the relationship between the demographic attributes and stages of participation, livelihood improvement, policies and initiatives. Qualitative data was collected using one on one interviews with ten key informants and the results were used to inform the quantitative data collection from one hundred and twenty LNWMGA wool and mohair growers from Semonkong.

Findings revealed significant gender disparities suggesting that wool and mohair industry had limit effect in promoting equal gender participation as women's participation was limited by societal expectations and domestic responsibilities, and cultural norms, perceived expertise and lack of policies which favoured men in leadership roles, resulting in male dominance. The majority of growers (82.5%) confirmed men participate more while women's participation was (16.7%). The chi square test was also used to determine the association between wool and mohair growers' demographics and participation. The findings revealed that there is no association between the variables (equal participation, stages of participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives) with gender, age, marital status and education. While, livelihood improvement, policies and stages of participation had the significant association with age and education. The wool and mohair industry does not promote gender participation especially equal participation.

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List of Abbreviations

BKB	Boere Krediet Bank
CDE	Convention against Discrimination in Education
DLN	Denmark Lesotho Network
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
FPE	Free Primary Education
MAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Sahara Africa
WaMCoP	Wool and Mohair Value-chain Competitiveness Project
WAMPP	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

1.0 Introduction/Background

The wool and mohair industry holds significant economic, social, and cultural importance in various regions around the world (IFAD, 2023: Khotso, 2020: Rantšo, 2015). It involves the harvesting of natural fibres from sheep and goats. These fibres are widely used in the textile industry to produce a variety of products, namely clothing, blankets, carpets, and other textiles. Mofo (2022) and WAMPP (2018) report that these fibres are used in the apparel industry and especially high-end fashion mostly in developed countries. The production of wool and mohair involves several stages: rearing, shearing, sorting, cleaning, spinning, and weaving. In recent years, sustainable practices in wool and mohair production have gained attention globally due to their growing economic gains and concerns with specialised breeds of sheep and goats developed to optimise fibre quality and quantity (IFAD, 2023).

The wool and mohair industry is therefore the bedrock of many agricultural economies worldwide. Within the agricultural sector, livestock production forms the greatest contributor to the global economy. It contributes about 33% of GDP (Kaluwa et al., 2022). Based on Khanal, et al. (2022), livestock production supports the livelihood of at least 1.3 billion people worldwide. In this context, the wool and mohair industry as the major sector in livestock production is an important contributor to people's livelihoods globally with Australia, China and New Zealand as the leading commercial producers of wool in the world (Allafi, et al., 2022; Devaux, 2019; Mokhethi, 2015). On the other hand, Hunter & Mokitimi (1990); Mokhethi (2015); Rantšo (2015) argue that South Africa is the largest farmer of angora goats and exporter of mohair, along with Argentina, Turkey, and the United States of America (USA) respectively.

As Rantšo (2015) states that the production of wool and mohair has a long history as an income earner for farming families in Lesotho since the 1850s. The sector adds significantly to the economy of the country. Khotso (2020) and Mokhethi (2015) both agree that wool and mohair have the highest GDP and GNP percentage as compared to other agricultural sectors. Mokhethi (2015) further argues that wool and mohair production is the third income-generating and export product in Lesotho following water and diamonds. Maqalika (2020) asserts that Lesotho produces significant quantities of Marino apparel wool and mohair from Angora goats, allowing them to compete on the global market and contribute significantly to the economy of

the country. Mokhethi (2015) further emphasises that Lesotho produces a significant 14% of the world's mohair, second only to South Africa.

Although wool and mohair have the economic benefit, the industry like many others within the agricultural sector has reported inequalities due to male dominance (FOA (2023a); Kali (2020) and Mokati, et al. (2022). Kaluwa, et al. (2022) argue that in most world strategic sectors particularly the agricultural sector, gender inequality manifests in unequal access to resources, opportunities and rights of one's gender by perpetuating the disadvantage of one gender as opposed to the other. These inequalities are rooted in all divisions within the agricultural sector. Gender disparities in the wool and mohair industry are therefore not an exception. They have allowed men to dominate the sector in financial decision-making, ownership of livestock and the labour force (IFAD, 2021). These disparities can be addressed through gender participation initiatives that can equally benefit both men and women

Participation plays a crucial role in fostering inclusivity, empowerment, and social cohesion within communities and societies. Apgar & Thorpe (2021) and Thorpe & Gaventa, (2020) agree that participation is the act of taking part in an activity or event. Thorpe & Gaventa (2020) further state that participation implies involvement, engagement, and contribution to a particular endeavour, such as a discussion, project, or decision-making processes. The concept of participation has different levels which Singh (2022) uses Sarah White's 1996 work on the forms and functions of participation. Singh (2022) and Tisdall (2013) assert that White distinguishes four forms of participation: nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative. The transformative participation is relevant to the study because the wool and mohair industry is still male-dominated and transformation needs to take place to include and empower women to participate. Bladt & Percy-Smith (2021) assert that transformative participation is the empowerment of those involved, and as a result, it alters the structures and institutions that lead to marginalisation and exclusion.

In the context of gender, Dumont, et al. (2019) state that participation is active involvement, engagement, and inclusion of individuals of all genders. Gender participation is a critical concept within the broader framework of gender equality, emphasising the need for equitable opportunities, representation, and decision-making power for both women and men (Odera & Mulusa, 2020). The key aspect of gender involves participation in agriculture, the economic sphere, community and social participation, gender participation in politics, education, healthcare, media and representation, sports and family and households (Dumont, et al., 2019).

In many societies, Ferndandez-Gimenez, et al. (2021): Phiri, et al. (2022) Quisumbing & Doss, (2021) argue that gender participation has historically been unequal, with men often having greater access to and representation in various domains compared to women. USAID, (2023) reports that globally, the labour force participation rate for women is 25 per cent lower than the rate for men. However, efforts to address gender disparities and promote equal participation have gained momentum in recent decades. This has led to increased attention to the need for policies, initiatives, and programs, aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering individuals of all genders to participate fully in all aspects of life. Some of the initiatives implemented to achieve this goal include countries committing to the UN call to achieve SDG 5: Gender Equality in all developmental sectors. Although there is progress toward the attainment of gender equality in most sectors worldwide Sen (2019); UNDP (2022) reported that in 2022, SSA as compared to other regions had the highest gender gap at 67.9% and it is projected that it will take 98 years to close the gender gap.

Gender participation is therefore a critical factor in achieving social equity in the wool and mohair industry. Ferndandez-Gimenez, et al. (2021) assert that gender participation extends beyond mere numbers and quotas of women and men, it encompasses the equitable distribution of opportunities, and contributions and the dismantling of gender-based stereotypes. While different genders may be represented but fail to participate either by choice or structural constraints, Chipfupa & Tagwi (2021) confirm this by arguing that youth in SSA countries view agriculture as a sector of 'last resort and low productivity', shunning family farming and opting for wage employment in urban areas. In addition, to understand the degree of gender participation in agriculture, Quismbing & Dose (2021) state that nations need to design effective policies, programs, and interventions that promote inclusivity, enhance productivity, and contribute to the well-being of agricultural communities.

Inequalities in gender participation are perpetuated by the government's policies, gender-based social norms, and financial constraints and to some extent women themselves by failing to recognise men as the gatekeepers of gender equality in agriculture (Connell, 2005; Diamanti and Duncan, 2023). That is gender equality can only be realised through the participation of both men and women, however, there is still a huge gap within the agricultural sector in general (Quisumbing & Doss, 2021). The gap has continued to allow men to be dominant, increasing their economic status. It is indicated in the IFAD (2021) Report that Basotho women are often engaged in subsistence farming and household responsibilities, while men dominate commercial agriculture and decision-making processes. This division of labour leads to

disparities in income, access to resources, and power in decision-making within households and communities, contributing to the cycle of poverty and inequality.

Lesotho, like other SSA countries, is making progress towards the attainment of gender equality in sectors such as education and healthcare UNDP (2022). The country has ratified treaties aimed at achieving gender equality in most sectors, including the include: National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) II and Lesotho Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030. However, the problem is still prevalent even in industries such as wool and mohair. IFAD (2021) and FAO (2023a) report that Basotho women in particular face constraints in access to resources such as income, land, ownership of livestock, household decision-making over the control of livestock and leadership positions in the industry.

In general, there has been a growing recognition of the gender disparities present within the wool and mohair industry. Mokati et al. (2022) note that in recent years, the issue has become a focus of research and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing the inequalities which in most cases are faced by women in various aspects of this industry.

Herrero (2020) argues that factors such as traditional gender roles that assign certain tasks to men and women, cultural norms that prioritise men's participation in decision-making processes, lack of policies promoting gender equality, and inadequate support systems for women perpetuate these disparities within the industry. In the end, the disparities perpetuate cycles of poverty, limit women's economic empowerment, hinder their ability to access markets and resources, and restrict their overall socio-economic development (Mokati et al., 2022).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Wool and mohair industry is a globally significant industry improving the livelihoods of its participants (Mokhethi, 2015). However, much has not been investigated about this industry concerning its contribution to gender inequality and empowerment in Lesotho which are a major concern within the agricultural sector which may make it hard to achieve the United Nations' call for SDGs.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the wool and mohair industry promote gender participation and empowerment in Lesotho.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine the level of participation by different genders within the LNWMGA.
2. To investigate the extent to which gender participation affects the lifestyle of LNWMGA members.
3. Analyse the specific policies in place that promote gender participation within the LNWMGA.
4. To analyse the relationship between socio-demographic attributes and the perceptions of the participants on gender participation in different stages, livelihood outcomes, initiatives and policies that promote gender participation.

1.4 Research Questions

1. At what stage do different genders participate in LNWMGA?
2. How does participation in different stages contribute to LNWMGA members' livelihoods?
3. What are the initiatives (policies, programmes, and activities) within LNWMGA to promote gender participation?
4. What is the relationship between socio-demographic attributes and the perceptions of the participants on gender participation in different stages, livelihood outcomes and policies that promote gender participation?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study aims to benefit the Lesotho agricultural sector, particularly the livestock production and LNWMGA by ensuring that there is a balanced and diversified participation. This will influence understanding of the proportion and distribution of gender in various roles to provide a baseline for evaluating inclusivity and can inform the targeted interventions to address existing disparities. Further, the study is important because it will uncover formal and informal policies existing within LNWMGA hindering the participation of the underrepresented gender to shed light on areas requiring improvement and or empowerment. Addressing these barriers can enhance the roles and shape the direction of LNWMGA to contribute to more effective and inclusive processes. By analysing the opportunities and challenges faced by men and women, the study aims to contribute to strategies that foster economic empowerment and enhance the livelihood of members.

In addition, by evaluating existing policies and initiatives the study will influence gender-responsive policies to create an enabling environment that supports equal representation and foster more diverse associations. Lastly, the study will contribute significantly to the limited literature on issues of gender with the LNWMGA and Lesotho agricultural sector at large, while also being used for future research. Given the limited existing research on gender participation in the wool and mohair industry, this proposed research aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive study.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter gives an overview of the background of participation of men and women within the wool and mohair industry with a specific focus on the LNWMGA. It indicates that the industry has historically been dominated by men numerically and with financial decision-making, ownership and labour. The statement of the problem is also covered, showing that despite the government law and regulation to promote gender participation inequality within the wool and mohair industry persists. This chapter also presents the purpose of the study, together with objectives, research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The chapter covers the theoretical framework and literature review to this study. It discusses the Gender Transformation Approach as the theory used to analyse gender equality within agricultural associations. It further reviews the relevant literature on gender participation in the wool and mohair industry, providing an overview of the wool and mohair globally and locally and its significance. Lastly, the chapter explores the existing literature on gender dynamics in agriculture, particularly livestock production guided by the four research questions.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as a roadmap for researchers, guiding them through the research process from formulating research questions to drawing conclusions based on empirical evidence (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It provides a lens through which researchers can analyse data, interpret results, and make meaningful contributions to their respective fields. In a theoretical framework, a researcher explains the existing theories that support their research, showing how their dissertation or paper is grounded and relevant in established ideas (Kivunja, 2018).

The study used Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) as theoretical anchor. MacArthur, et al., (2022) state that the GTA was formulated by feminist planners and scholars such as Sirlatha Batliwala, Naiba Kabeer, Sara Longwe, Caroline Moser, Jo Rowlands, Siskia Wiering and Kate Young around the 1990s. FOA (2023a) states that, as a theoretical framework, GTA encourages critical reflection and examination of inequitable social structures and institutions as underlying causes of gender inequality. Based on the UNFPA (2023) report, GTA aims to address roles, norms, and power dynamics while promoting changes in gender relations, opportunities, and resources. According to Wong (2019), change in this approach involves tackling the root causes of gender inequality is more important than merely narrowing the gender disparities that exist between men and women. The implication is that GTA does not just focus exclusively on the self-improvement of individual women, but rather it also works towards transforming power dynamics and structures that act to reinforce gender inequalities.

This can only be achieved when the root causes of gender discrimination are challenged, which include political, economic and social structures, unequal power relations, attitudes, gender norms, and behaviours (Marcusi et al., 2021). It is further stated in the UNFPA (2023) report

that by working together with women and men, GTA transforms harmful gender norms, roles, and relationships and restructures power, resources, and services for a more equitable distribution.

The GTA is related to my study because it is a gender analysis tool that helped to interpret inequalities, and differences, and understand better their root causes within LNWMGA. It can address the power relations on tasks and roles within the LNWMGA, opportunities, access and control over resources which can have effects on the decision-making of both men and women in their households and the association to bring about gender equality and empowerment. The GTA was successfully used in the status of women in the agrifood system in Ethiopia to show the inequalities women experience in agriculture.

2.2 Overview of Wool and Mohair

Wool and mohair are natural fibres celebrated for their unique properties, such as warmth, durability, and versatility, making them essential in the textile industry globally (IFAD, 2023). Mofo (2023) notes that wool and mohair have played a significant role for centuries in producing clothing, carpets, and other textile products. The global production of these fibres remains crucial, with various countries contributing to the overall supply (Devaux, 2019). Wool is primarily obtained from sheep through shearing. Key wool-producing countries include China, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, and Argentina, with China leading in production volume and Australia renowned for high-quality Merino wool (Devaux, 2019; Matthews, 2023). Mohair, a luxurious fibre from Angora goats, is predominantly produced in South Africa, Lesotho, Turkey, Argentina, and the United States (Mokhethi, 2015; Sacchero et al., 2023). South Africa leads globally in mohair production. The production process involves rearing goats, shearing, and processing the hair to produce clothing, upholstery fabrics, and rugs. Lesotho is the second-largest exporter of mohair and contributes 14% of the world's wool and mohair (Mokhethi, 2015).

2.2.1 Economic Significance of Wool and Mohair

The wool and mohair industry provides substantial economic benefits to producer countries (IFAD, 2023). The revenue from these fibres contributes to the income of farmers, communities, and the overall GDP of these nations. Wool and mohair production supports multiple sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and retail, making them valuable commodities in the global market. Additionally, the transformation of raw wool and mohair

into finished products adds further economic value and creates additional opportunities within domestic markets (Devaux, 2019). Australia continues to be one of the leading wool production countries and today, the industry is worth around $2.2 billion a year (Biki, 2023). Maeong (2024) adds that the industry in Lesotho generates nearly M2 billion annually and employs thousands of Basotho.

The industry supports livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, by providing a stable source of income and diversifying agricultural activities. Employment in farming, shearing, processing, and marketing contributes to economic stability and rural development (Mofo, 2022; Mokhethi, 2015; Mpyana, 2019; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). Moreover, wool and mohair production positively impact the environment by maintaining grasslands and preventing soil erosion, thus promoting sustainable land management practices. However, de Beer (2011); García et al. (2012) challenge that goats have been a major conservation problem in many places as they tend to overgraze and their grazing can lead to degradation

2.2.2 Wool and Mohair Industry in Lesotho

Lesotho's wool and mohair industry has its roots in the introduction of Angora goats and Merino sheep by the colonial government to transform Basotho farmers into wool and mohair producers (Rantšo, 2015). The industry significantly contributes to the rural economy, with farmers ranging from smallholders to breeders of superior gene-quality animals (Uys, 1970). Most farmers in Lesotho are small-scale and communal, particularly in the mountain districts of Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek, Quthing and Rural Maseru (Mofo, 2021). As a result, this industry influences rural development however, Tsee, (2023) argues that farmers depend on the quality of the grazing land for feeding.

Furthermore, Wool and mohair are Lesotho's primary agricultural exports, integrating the country into the global economy through international trade (IFAD, 2023; Khotso, 2022; Kali, 2020; Mokati et al., 2022; Mokhethi, 2015; Rantšo, 2015). Wool and mohair fleeces are sold through private traders, government-sponsored agents, or smugglers, primarily marketed via South African cooperatives (Hunter and Mokitimi, 1990; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). These exports generate substantial income and improve living standards for farmers, making them economically significant (Khotso, 2022; Mphale, 1993; Mokhethi, 2015). IFAD (2023) reports that in Lesotho wool is a leading agricultural commodity export while mohair is the fifth largest export. However, most wool and mohair are exported raw, benefiting developed countries

more, as they add value through processing and selling at higher prices (Khotso, 2022; Mokhethi, 2015).

Khotso (2022) further emphasises that the global market for wool and mohair is changing with a significant shift to responsible production standards and growth with high-income benefits. This shift calls for more wool and mohair growers with both men and women participation. Rantšo (2015) noted that with the increased production and market opportunities in the wool and mohair industry, over the years the Government of Lesotho (GoL) helped Basotho to improve their productivity and market through the establishment of different corporations from the 1970s Hunter and Mokitimi (1990).

In 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) helped Basotho farmers establish the (LNWMGA), established with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture in 2001, is the largest and most representative organisation in Lesotho's wool and mohair industry (WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). LNWMGA aims to help farmers improve wool and mohair quality, share market opportunities, reduce shipping costs, and provide training. With approximately 40,000 members, LNWMGA has a significant presence in highland areas (Mofo, 2021; Mohale, 2023)

The association has the highest membership of 45% men, 30% women and the youth at 25% (with male dominance), (Mohale, 2023). The gender disparities have continued to allow men to be dominant within LNWMGA and the wool and mohair industry in general. However, as a representative body for wool and mohair growers, the association has the potential to influence resource allocation, opportunity distribution, and decision-making processes, thus empowering all its members. The association can be a catalyst for gender equality and empowerment within Lesotho communities.

2.2.3 Challenges in the Wool and Mohair Industry

Despite its economic importance, the wool and mohair industry in Lesotho faces several challenges. The reliance on exporting raw wool and mohair limits local industrialization and job creation (Mofo, 2021). Additionally, Basotho farmers incur additional costs for logistics and marketing in South Africa, where brokers dominate the market (Khotso, 2020; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). Efforts to localise the industry and reduce dependency on South African brokers such BKB have faced challenges and limited success (WAMPP/IFAD, 2020).

Stock theft is another significant challenge, with livestock theft exceeding R750 million annually globally, and only about 30% of thefts officially reported (AgriSETA, 2018). Women

farmers are particularly vulnerable to stock theft due to their inability to retaliate during attacks (Dzimba & Matooane, 2005; Gumede et al., 2018). Despite these challenges, the economic significance of wool and mohair underscores their importance in both domestic and international markets (Khotso, 2020).

2.3 Gender Participation in Agriculture

Globally, both men and women are involved in agriculture, but their roles and responsibilities differ by region and are evolving (Quisumbing & Doss, 2021). Gender significantly influences access to productive resources and opportunities, with women in many developing countries being more involved in agriculture than men but having less access to essential assets, inputs, and services. These disparities are shaped by social structures, including cultural, political, and economic systems (Batool et al., 2014; Dan & Kim, 2022; Rusawo et al., 2022; Tuoane, 2023).

Social structures perpetuate gender inequality in agriculture by distributing power, resources, and opportunities within societies (Branisa et al., 2010). Cultural norms, beliefs, and values dictate acceptable roles and behaviours for men and women, often reinforcing stereotypes and discriminatory practices. This results in insecure land tenure, restricted access to productive assets, and limited ownership of livestock for women due to patriarchal systems (Andersson et al., 2022; Quisumbing & Doss, 2021).

In many societies, especially in rural areas, gender inequalities are reinforced by social norms that accept male dominance in agriculture. These norms are taught from childhood through various institutions such as homes, communities, churches, and schools. Efforts to promote gender equality in agriculture often involve empowering women and addressing the key constraints they face, such as lesser control over natural resources, reduced labour availability, minimal access to financial resources, and lower educational levels (Njobe & Kaaria, 2015).

In contexts such as farming in Lesotho, the industry is predominantly male-dominated. Cultural conventions dissuade women from engaging in profitable farming endeavours, relegating them to crop planting while men manage livestock, which provides better income from wool, and mohair (Halim et al., 2022; Pitikoe, 2016).

2.3.1 Gender Roles in Agriculture

Gender roles in agriculture are shaped by cultural, social, economic, and geographical factors (Belay & Oljira, 2016; Quisumbing & Doss, 2022). Traditionally, heavy farm work such as ploughing, planting, harvesting, and animal husbandry has been seen as male-dominated, while women handle tasks like caring for animals, planting, weeding, and post-harvest activities. These roles vary significantly across cultures and regions and have evolved due to industrialization, urbanisation, education, and policy interventions (FAO, 2023; Mokati et al., 2022).

In developed countries, gender roles in agriculture are less pronounced, with both men and women participating in a wide range of agricultural tasks, including off-farm employment opportunities that diversify household income (Xing & Gounder, 2021). These societies often have policies and frameworks that promote gender equality, such as gender-sensitive agricultural extension services and support for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas.

In many developing countries, traditional gender norms and cultural practices dictate the distribution of roles, often positioning men as the primary providers, which creates an imbalance in authority and responsibilities within agricultural households (Mthi et al., 2018). Women are relegated to tasks perceived as "women's work" and have limited access to resources such as land, credit, technology, and extension services (Holmelin, 2019). This division is evident in the wool and mohair industry, where men dominate roles requiring physical strength and specialised skills, such as shearing and herding, while women handle tasks like feeding, watering, healthcare management, and household-level processing (Mokati et al., 2022; Njobe & Kaaria, 2015; Obayelu et al., 2020; Rantšo, 2015).

2.3.2 Gender Roles and Challenges in Wool and Mohair Industry

The wool and mohair industry encompasses a variety of participants across different stages of production, including producers, shearers, processors, transport personnel, and consumers. In addition, agricultural associations, NGOs, and government bodies significantly influence this sector (Khotso, 2020; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). Gender participation in the industry is influenced by factors such as age, marital status, geographical location, cultural practices, production scale, and educational background (Mokati et al., 2022). Historically, both men and women have played essential roles in this industry.

Women play a critical role in the wool and mohair industry globally, comprising half of the rural workforce in most wool and mohair-producing countries. They are engaged in various aspects of production, processing, and marketing. However, their lack of influence denies the sector half of its potential workforce (Dan & Kim, 2022; Sumy et al., 2021; Future Directions International, 2015). In many Asian and African countries, women are primarily responsible for small ruminants like goats and sheep, while men handle larger animals like cattle (Batool et al., 2014; Dan & Kim, 2022; Rusawo et al., 2022; Sumy et al., 2021; Theeuwen et al., 2021; Vijayalakshmy et al., 2023). Despite their significant involvement, women often lack control over resources and decision-making, which limits their ability to expand their businesses and generate income (Rusawo et al., 2022).

In Lesotho, the majority of the workforce in the wool and mohair industry are men, handling tasks from rearing sheep and goats to transporting wool and mohair to the market in South Africa. Historically, Basotho women were involved in the cottage industry, participating in weaving enterprises to create job opportunities and sustain traditional skills (Mashinini, 2000; Rantšo, 2022).

Although women contribute to production, processing, value addition, and marketing, their roles are often restricted by a "glass ceiling" that limits their leadership opportunities (Batool et al., 2014; Dan & Kim, 2022). Initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation and leadership are emerging, such as mentorship programs to help women develop the necessary skills and confidence (IFAD, 2019).

2.3.3 Attributes Beyond Gender

Attributes beyond gender, such as skills, interests, education, values, beliefs, age, and marital status, influence gender roles and the division of labour. Recognizing and valuing these attributes is essential for promoting diversity, inclusion, and equality (Isah & Tango, 2022; Champions for Change, 2024).

The producer's knowledge of best practices in animal husbandry, genetics, and fibre processing techniques is crucial. Njobe & Kaaria, (2015) argue that well-educated producers may implement advanced methods, leading to higher-quality fibres. In developed countries, farmers, particularly women, often have higher levels of education and access to vocational training programs, enabling them to engage in specialised aspects of farming (Njobe & Kaaria, 2015). In contrast, many Basotho wool and mohair growers lack formal education and rely on

experience for production, which can hinder their business capabilities (Moiloa et al., 2020; Rantšo, 2022).

Age also influences participation in wool and mohair production. Middle-aged and older males dominate the industry in Lesotho due to the physical demands and managerial responsibilities required (Moiloa et al., 2020; Mokhethi et al., 2015; Nkholise, 2020). While these attributes may not directly affect the physical properties of wool and mohair fibres, they impact production practices, market dynamics, and consumer preferences (Champions for Change, 2024; Navjeet & Pallvi, 2021; OECD, 2021).

2.4 Gender participation

Gender participation refers to the involvement and representation of different genders in various activities, roles, and endeavours within a society, organisation, or specific context (Thorpe & Gaventa, 2020). It is essential for promoting equality across all developmental sectors, reflecting the distribution of power, resources, and opportunities among individuals based on gender identity. Disparities in gender participation often indicate systemic issues such as gender discrimination, unequal access to opportunities, and cultural biases (Akerkar, 2001; Apgar & Thorpe, 2021). Addressing these disparities involves implementing policies and initiatives to foster equal opportunities, remove barriers to participation, and promote gender diversity and inclusivity (Apgar & Thorpe, 2021).

Significant disparities in gender participation persist across many domains globally, with women historically underrepresented in leadership positions in politics, agriculture, academia, and other fields. These disparities are often attributed to systemic barriers such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, cultural norms that prioritise male leadership, and lack of access to education and training (Raimi, Lukman & Madueke, L. & Okoye, 2016). Connell's "gender order" model highlights how social structures and institutions shape gender participation, influenced by various forms of gender power like patriarchy (Zinn & Hofmeister, 2022).

2.4.1 Participation Levels/Stage

Participation levels refer to the extent to which individuals engage in activities, events, or processes within a specific context, as outlined by Mulugeta (2003). This concept is applied across various fields, including sociology, psychology, education, and economics, to measure individual involvement in social, cultural, and economic activities. Factors influencing participation levels include age, gender, socio-economic status, cultural background, and

personal interests (Holland et al., 2015; Petersen et al., 2021). Holland et al. (2015) further argue that understanding these participation levels is essential for policymakers, educators, researchers, and organisations to design effective strategies and programs that encourage and motivate participation.

Sarah White's framework categorises participation into four forms: nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative participation. Nominal participation is the lowest level, often symbolic, where individuals are included in name only, giving legitimacy to development plans without actual engagement or change (White, 1996). In the wool and mohair industry, nominal participation might involve individuals who are merely associated with the industry without contributing to its operations or decision-making processes. Despite its limitations, nominal participation can still influence perceptions and social dynamics within the industry.

White (1990) reiterates that instrumental participation, the second form, involves active and meaningful engagement in activities that directly contribute to specific goals or outcomes. In the wool and mohair industry, this includes active involvement in operations that promote industry advancement, improvement, or sustainability. However, instrumental participation is often influenced by hierarchical structures, which tend to favour men in positions of responsibility (FOA, 2013; Herrero, 2020). Supporting instrumental participants is vital for fostering innovation, collaboration, and inclusive development within the industry (Moynihan, 2002).

Representative participation ensures community members have a voice in decision-making and implementation processes that affect them (Institute of Development Studies, 2024; Vaughan & Lancon, 2010). This form of participation Cornwall (2008) concurs that it focuses on promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equitable representation within industry-related discussions, initiatives, and organisations. In agriculture and the wool and mohair industry, representative participation involves diverse perspectives in decision-making processes, governance structures, and advocacy efforts. Although representative participation seeks to include both men and women, disparities remain, with fewer women engaged in the industry compared to men. Initiatives like those by Ethical Trade Norway and the National Wool Growers' Association (NWGA) aim to uplift and engage women in agriculture (Marais, 2021).

The final form, transformative participation, aims to empower individuals and alter the structures and institutions that lead to marginalisation and exclusion (White, 1996). Similarly, Vaughan & Lancon (2010) note that this form involves active engagement in decision-making,

problem-solving, and action-taking to address power dynamics, inequalities, and systemic barriers. In the wool and mohair industry, transformative participation challenges underlying social, economic, and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Tisdall, 2013).

2.4.2 Participation Levels, Value Chain and Leadership Positions

Gender is one of the factors influencing participation levels is involvement and representation of different genders in various activities, roles, or sectors within a given context (Akerkar, 2001; Ashley 2022; Burnett, 2018; Eime et al., 2021). In Lesotho's wool and mohair industry, gender participation levels vary across different stages of the value chain (IFAD, 2023). Women play significant roles in production and processing, yet disparities exist, particularly in decision-making and resource access (Herrero, 2020; Mokhethi, 2015). Women are actively involved in primary production activities alongside supporting men with feeding, watering, and health management, while men dominate shepherding and herding tasks. Although both are involved, men's roles are more noticed as they have more authority and control over livestock ownership and management decisions, reflecting gendered norms and cultural practices (Mokati et al., 2022; Rantšo, 2015).

In processing, transportation and marketing, women participate in value addition activities, particularly in artisanal spinning, weaving, and textile production. Rantšo (2015) concurs that Basotho women have a tradition of hand-spinning and weaving wool and mohair into products for household consumption or sale in markets. Men on the other hand, are more prominently involved in market engagement and trade activities within the industry (Mokati et al., 2022).

Similarly, Leadership roles in the industry are predominantly held by men, reflecting broader gender disparities in decision-making and power dynamics (Mokati et al., 20220; Ramgareeb, 2024; Teresa-Morales et al., 2022; UNSD, 2015). Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi (2023); Turi et al., (2022) emphasise that women often encounter obstacles to career advancement and are underrepresented in top management roles. Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions to promote women's empowerment, enhance gender equality, and create more inclusive and equitable opportunities within the industry (Mokati et al., 2022; Tuoane, 2022).

2.4.3 Participation Levels in Various Industries

Gender inequality remains prevalent in many strategic sectors globally, leading to lower participation levels for the disadvantaged gender (Jain-Chandra et al., 2017). Drange et al. (2023); Ramgareeb (2024) agree that in the education sector, women are more represented in

teaching and administrative roles, while men are more likely to hold leadership positions and dominate fields such as science, engineering, and mathematics. Efforts to address these disparities include promoting gender-sensitive teaching practices, encouraging girls' participation in STEM subjects, and supporting women's leadership development in academia (Ro et al., 2021).

Similarly, in the healthcare sector, women are highly represented in roles such as nursing, midwifery, and caregiving (Ayaz et al., 2021; Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2021). However, men typically occupy higher-paying specialisations like surgery and administration and hold leadership positions (Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2021). The WHO (2019) reports that women hold around 70% of jobs in the health workforce but are largely segregated vertically, with men holding the majority of higher-status roles. Female health workers face additional disadvantages due to horizontal occupational segregation, gender norms, and cultural prejudices (Ayaz et al., 2021; Jain-Chandra et al., 2017; Martin, 2013; OECD, 2024).

Initiatives to improve gender parity in healthcare include encouraging men to pursue careers in nursing and midwifery and tackling discrimination and gender bias in career advancement (WHO, 2019). Traditional gender stereotypes also influence participation in industries like wool and mohair, where men are associated with physically demanding tasks and women with fibre processing and artisanal textile production (Ramgareeb, 2024; Rantšo, 2015; Teresa-Morales et al., 2022). Addressing these disparities requires challenging stereotypes, promoting inclusive policies, and supporting initiatives that foster gender equality across various industries.

2.5 Gender Participation and Livelihood

Livelihood refers to the means by which individuals or households sustain their lives and secure their basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, and education (Chambers & Conway, 1992; UNISDR, n.d.). Gender participation is crucial for livelihoods, as it empowers individuals and communities to engage actively in decision-making processes, access resources, generate income, manage risks, and improve overall well-being (Karl et al., 2002). According to Lawless & McDougall (2019), participation enables both men and women to develop skills and abilities, becoming more self-reliant and capable of sustaining their livelihoods. By participating in planning activities and decision-making processes, individuals can assert their voices, rights, and concerns, influencing outcomes that impact their well-being.

Gender participation significantly enhances livelihoods by enabling access to essential resources such as water, land, credit, inputs, and technical knowledge. Etsay et al. (2023); Urs et al. (2011) argue that these resources are fundamental to rural livelihoods, particularly land, as most rural populations depend on agriculture for subsistence or income. However, the World Bank (2021) highlights the deteriorating access to land in Africa, posing challenges for farmers. Additionally, participation in income-generating activities like agriculture, livestock raising, fishing, and post-harvest processing offers both genders opportunities for entrepreneurship and livelihood diversification. Engaging in market-oriented initiatives, vocational training programs, or business development activities can improve economic prospects and reduce poverty (Shameem & Kalam, 2018)

2.5.1 Livelihood Strategies in Agriculture

People often employ a combination of subsistence and income-generating activities, termed livelihood strategies, to meet these needs (Eneyew & Bekele, 2012). Walker et al. (2001) emphasise that livelihood strategies encompass a mix of activities, resources, and assets that help individuals or households sustain themselves and navigate economic, social, and environmental challenges. These strategies can be categorised into on-farm (livestock and crop production), off-farm (wage employment on other farms), non-farm (non-agricultural income sources such as wage employment, self-employment, property income, and remittances), and non-labour activities (Alemu, 2012).

Agricultural livelihood strategies are particularly crucial for rural households, involving various activities aimed at sustaining livelihoods, improving well-being, and achieving food security (Alemu, 2012; Kassegn & Abdinasir, 2023). These strategies are shaped by socio-economic factors, agro-ecological conditions, market dynamics, and cultural norms. Common agricultural strategies include livestock rearing, crop production, fisheries and aquaculture, market engagement, and capacity building through extension services (Kassegn & Abdinasir, 2023). There is consensus in the literature that the rearing of livestock, especially sheep and goats, is vital for rural populations, providing income, nutrition, livelihood security, and cultural resilience through products like meat, milk, wool, and mohair (Adams et al., 2021; Danso-Abbeam et al., 2024; Najjar & Baruah, 2023; Rocchi, 2016; Shivakumara et al., 2020). However, not all livestock owners are full-time farmers; some have other occupations or combine their livestock with relatives' herds, while others may leave farming for non-farm

employment in urban areas, despite limited opportunities (Danso-Abbeam et al., 2024; Rocchi, 2016).

2.5.2 Agricultural Associations and Livelihood of Wool and Mohair Growers

The participation of agricultural associations significantly empowers farmers, strengthens their livelihoods, and contributes to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector. Scholars such as Christian et al. (2024); Mpyana (2019); Mueller et al. (2015) agree that these associations, along with corporations, governments, and national and international organisations, play a crucial role in providing support, advocacy, and opportunities that enhance farmers' livelihoods. Christian (2024) notes that agricultural cooperatives often offer risk-sharing mechanisms that help farmers manage uncertainties like price fluctuations and weather-related challenges. Mueller et al. (2015) emphasise that membership in an association grants growers access to benefits that would be unattainable independently.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the NWGA in South Africa is a prominent agricultural association Mpyana (2019). Mofo (2022) states that the NWGA aims to improve both the quality and quantity of wool produced in communal wool sheep farming areas of South Africa and other countries. This association has credibility with wool-producing countries like Australia and New Zealand, as well as various government levels, organised agriculture, and international stakeholders like AgriSETA. The Rural Self-help Development Association (RSDA) in Lesotho, supported by the Denmark Lesotho Network (DLN), collaborates with smallholder farmers in several districts to improve their living conditions and influence through social capital mobilisation and dialogue with the private sector and government.

The wool and mohair industry benefits from extensive support to enhance the value of farmers' products, improve quality, and breeding, provide market opportunities, and offer training. In Lesotho, stakeholders such as IFAD, WAMPP, GoL, LNWMGA, and BKB's Lihoai Consultancy collectively assist growers with shearing, breeding, knowledge transfer, capacity building, and access to international markets through brokers like BKB (Mpyana, 2019). IFAD has funded WAMPP through GoL ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Department of Livestock Services, and the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, collaborating with LNWMGA to provide co-financing for improved production management, climate-smart rangeland management, and wool and mohair processing and marketing (CIAT; World Bank, 2018).

2.5.3 The Livelihood Outcomes

Participation in the wool and mohair industry primarily provides a source of income through wool and mohair sales, which are predominantly used in the textile industry (Mokhethi et al., 2015; Nkonki, 2008; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). Mokhethi (2015) notes that the revenue generated from these sales improves the financial well-being of growers and their families, allowing them to afford educational expenses, pay herders, cover the care costs for their livestock, and manage general household activities.

Nkonki (2008) highlights that participation in the wool and mohair industry enables growers to diversify their income sources, reducing their reliance solely on livestock production. Many growers engage in off-farm activities such as mining, entrepreneurship, and teaching to diversify their income streams. Mokhethi et al. (2015) confirm that this diversification helps protect growers from market fluctuations and other risks affecting agricultural production. Contrary, Chmieliński et al. (2023) warn that while off-farm activities are beneficial, they can sometimes distort production, since farmers might focus on such activities more.

Moreover, participation in the wool and mohair industry leads to job creation, providing employment opportunities for local communities. This industry is particularly significant in rural areas, where employment spans from rearing sheep and goats (herders) to shearing (local skilled labour) and transporting the fibre from rural shearing units (Nkonki, 2008). Active participation by growers also fosters skill development and knowledge transfer, improving farming practices and increasing productivity. It allows growers to collectively market their wool and mohair, negotiate better prices, and access larger markets, thereby increasing their income and profitability compared to selling independently (WAMPP/IFAD, 2020).

These commodities are the largest agricultural exports for Lesotho and play a crucial role in the livelihoods of an estimated 250,000 households. The industry holds significant potential for alleviating rural poverty and food insecurity in Lesotho (WAMPP/IFAD, 2020). Beyond economic benefits, agricultural cooperatives provide social advantages by fostering a sense of community, solidarity, and mutual support. Cooperative members work towards common goals, share risks and rewards, and contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities (IFAD, 2008). Participation in these cooperatives enhances growers' economic livelihoods through increased market access, improved bargaining power, access to resources and support, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and social cohesion.

2.6 Policies that promote gender participation

In many parts of the world, there is a renewed recognition of the crucial role that the agricultural sector can play in improving food security, generating employment and increasing export earnings. The agricultural sector, however, is more vulnerable to challenges such as environmental degradation due to climatic change, migration, disease outbreaks, economic degradation and social issues like gender inequality. It is therefore important that agricultural policies are formulated in an effort to raise productivity, achieve food security and reduce poverty (FAO, nd; Rafael, 2023).

Hanekom (1987) explains a policy as an indication of a goal, a specific purpose, or a programme of action that has been decided. The agricultural sector across the world is governed by various policies to raise agricultural productivity and improve rural social welfare. These policies play a key role in the process of agricultural economic growth. Morris et al., (2007); OECD (2012) report that agricultural policies are the principal driver of productivity growth.

2.6.1 Formal and informal policies in agriculture

The literature suggests that the guiding process for government institutions and organisations involves both formal and informal platforms (policies) (Laing et al., 2022; Ellertsdottir, n.d.). Formal policies consist of documented rules, procedures, and guidelines established by governments or institutions. These policies are designed to direct operations, regulate decision-making, and protect public interests across various domains, including agriculture, education, finance, and health (Laing et al., 2022). Formal policies provide a foundation for accountability and transparency and are crucial for maintaining organised and effective operations within these sectors.

In addition to establishing rules and procedures, West (2004) highlights that formal policies often include mechanisms for monitoring compliance, enforcing consequences for violations, and periodically reviewing and updating policy documents to reflect changes in internal or external environments. Effective communication with all stakeholders ensures awareness and understanding of the expectations set forth by the organisation (Laing et al., 2022).

An example of formal policies can be seen in the education sector. Scholars argue that there is an international obligation imposed on governments to provide compulsory and free primary education (Arendse, 2011; Motsamai & Alers, 2022). Article 4(a) of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CDE) requires states “to promote equality of opportunity

and treatment in the matter of education and in particular to make primary education compulsory and free." Lesotho and Swaziland are among the African countries that have successfully implemented free primary education policies. Section 29(6) of Swaziland's Constitution of 2005 provides that every child shall have the right to free education in a public school. Similarly, the government of Lesotho introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) on a phased basis between 2000 and 2006, which was reinforced to Free and Compulsory Primary Education by law in 2010. This policy has been running for over two decades and has significantly improved the level of education in Lesotho (Mukurunge et al., 2019).

In the agricultural sector, formal policies provide a regulatory framework that promotes market stability, manages resources, fosters innovation, ensures food security, supports rural development and promotes environmental sustainability (Rural21, 2013). These policies are essential for the overall well-being and resilience of agricultural systems and societies, promoting responsible farming practices that benefit both producers and consumers (Buitenhuis et al., 2020). Rural development policies, in particular, stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance livelihoods in rural areas by promoting agrarian reform, rural infrastructure development, and access to markets and credit (Byerlee et al., 2005; Corral et al., 2017).

Agricultural policies also include regulatory measures to control the flow of agricultural products across borders. These regulations, such as quality standards, grading systems, tariffs, quotas, and trading licences, protect domestic producers from unfair competition, ensure food security, and maintain trade balance (AGRA, 2022). For formal policies to be effective, proper implementation is crucial. This involves policy development, communication, training, monitoring, and enforcement, which collectively help establish a culture of compliance and accountability (van Tongeren, 2008; Williams et al., 2020).

Equally important are informal policies, which are unwritten rules and regulations influenced by norms, customs, and traditional practices (Azari & Smith, 2012; Clark, 1987; Dau et al., 2022). These policies play a significant role in shaping behaviours, interactions, and decision-making within societies or organisations, particularly in the agricultural sector. Informal policies often regulate daily operations, decision-making processes, and interactions among farmers, employees, and other stakeholders (Dhewa, 2016; Tamako et al., 2022; Zain et al., 2022).

In many African communities, farmers rely heavily on traditional knowledge passed down through generations for agricultural decision-making (Ogen, 2006; Tamako et al., 2022). This informal knowledge includes insights on planting dates, crop varieties, and pest management strategies, which complement formal scientific research and are crucial for adapting to local environmental conditions and ensuring sustainable farming practices. Such informal knowledge is integral to the livelihoods of rural populations and the resilience of agricultural systems (Tamako et al., 2022).

Furthermore, informal policies within agricultural associations reflect unwritten laws, traditions, and conventions that influence members' interactions and decision-making. These informal practices often support resource sharing, mutual support, and cooperation among farmers, which are vital for the success of agricultural associations (Ogen, 2006). While formal regulations provide a governance framework, the effectiveness and dynamics of these associations are frequently shaped by informal practices that enhance collective action and community resilience.

Both formal and informal policies play critical roles in the agricultural sector. Formal policies provide structured guidelines and regulations that promote accountability, innovation, and sustainability, while informal policies offer complementary traditional knowledge and practices that support local adaptation and resilience. The interplay between these two types of policies is essential for the holistic development and sustainability of agricultural systems, particularly in rural areas where agriculture is a primary livelihood source (Tamako et al., 2022).

2.6.2 Policies aimed at promoting gender participation in agriculture

Policies aimed at promoting gender participation in agriculture are essential for achieving gender equality, empowering farmers, enhancing agricultural productivity, and improving food security. Despite women’s critical role in agriculture, they often face limited access to resources, land, credit, and technology compared to men (Gadeberg, 2023). At both national and international levels, various policies and initiatives have been implemented to promote gender equality in agriculture. These policies aim to increase women’s participation by empowering them in decision-making processes, providing equal access to resources, and enhancing their overall well-being (Subedi, 2008).

One common approach is integrating gender into agricultural development programs and projects. Governmental and non-governmental actors are encouraged to mainstream gender in their policies and strategies. This involves ensuring that specific needs and priorities are considered in designing and implementing agricultural interventions. For instance, programs may provide targeted training and capacity-building opportunities for women farmers, promote their access to extension services and market information, or support women's entrepreneurship in agriculture (Gadeberg, 2023). In the African region, Uganda and Tanzania have developed gender mainstreaming strategies to integrate gender issues into sectoral policies and programs. Tanzania's National Agriculture Policy (2013) and Uganda's National Agriculture Policy (2013) highlight the importance of gender equity, though they often lack detailed plans and strategies for effective implementation (Ampaire et al., 2020).

Financial inclusion policies also enhance gender participation by setting up dedicated financial products for farmers, improving financial literacy skills, and supporting women's participation in rural finance institutions. Access to credit, savings, insurance, and other financial services enables farmers to invest in their farms, adopt new technologies, and cope with risks such as climate change (Adegbite, 2021; Atakli & Agbenyo, 2020). However, Adegbite (2021) emphasises that gender inequalities and structural barriers limit women's participation, exacerbated by a lack of financial access. Effective financial inclusion in agriculture must address systemic obstacles and disparities to increase gender involvement.

Additionally, gender-responsive policies ensure the participation of both men and women in policymaking processes, tilting the scale towards gender equality. These efforts include mainstreaming gender equality in agricultural research and extension services, improving women's participation in leadership, and integrating gender-sensitive approaches into extension programs (Adegbite, 2021). Gender-responsive policies ensure that research agendas address the specific needs of both male and female farmers and foster the participation of women scientists and extension workers in agricultural innovation systems. Comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable policies are necessary to address the structural inequalities hindering women's full engagement in the sector, challenging discriminatory norms while empowering women as agents of change in agriculture (Odongo, 2023).

At the regional level, laws and policies governing agricultural development include the African Union's Maputo Declaration, which commits governments to spend at least 10% of their national budget on agricultural development (Malabo Declaration, 2014). Additionally, the

SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (2013) aims to develop a legally binding instrument to stimulate sustainable agricultural development and food security in the SADC region. The government of Lesotho, committed to these regional policies, has its own policies governing the agricultural sector, including the National Strategic Development Plan, 2018-19-2022-23 (NSDP II). These policies demonstrate the importance of gender-focused approaches to agricultural development and the commitment of national and regional bodies to promote gender equality in agriculture (AU, nd).

2.6.3 Lesotho Policies on Gender Equality

Lesotho has complied with various regional and global frameworks aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. These include, on a global scale, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). On the African continent, Lesotho adheres to frameworks such as the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women. Additionally, Lesotho became a signatory and ratifier of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008 and reaffirmed this commitment in 2016 (Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

Moreover, Lesotho has incorporated the provisions of the SADC gender protocol into its National Gender and Development Policy 2018–2030. The main goal of this policy is to institutionalise gender justice and equality as fundamental components of social, economic, and political development. The policy focuses on several priority sectors, including agriculture, women and governance, employment and economic development, food and nutrition security, and access to productive resources. Furthermore, gender considerations are integrated into all thematic areas of Lesotho's updated (NSDP II) and Vision 2020 (2018/19–2022/23).

In 2003, GoL adopted its first Gender and Development Policy (GAD Policy) to achieve gender equality across various sectors by ensuring equal opportunities for all, including marginalised groups. Key areas of focus for this policy include gender, climate change, sustainable development, disaster risk management, and gender governance. Notable achievements under this policy include the enactment of the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006, the Land Act 2010, and the National Assembly Electoral Act 2011. Despite these progressive laws, enforcement remains a challenge, limiting their effectiveness in promoting gender equality (Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

Gender inequality persists in access to economic resources such as land and livestock ownership. According to the Population Census (2016) Report, men own approximately 70% of the land, while women own only 30%. The Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act (LCMPA) of 2006 aimed to address this disparity by eliminating marital authority and granting married women equal voice in joint matrimonial properties and matters (Shale, 2023). However, actual implementation remains inconsistent. Despite these challenges, progress has been made, and women can now own land independently if they are single (Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

The GoL has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by enacting regulations in various developing industries, including agriculture. Rampa (2023) highlights the potential of agriculture to provide jobs, especially in rural areas where many women and youth reside. Recent droughts have exacerbated food insecurity, forcing many farmers to sell their livestock (Climate Risk Profile: Lesotho, 2021; Rate, GDPAG, 2018). In response, the government launched the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Tier II project, which provided greenhouse technology to farmers in the districts of Maseru, Mafeteng, Berea, and Leribe, generating 100 jobs, including positions for 21 women (Gol, 2018; Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

The colonial period saw the implementation of policies aimed at enhancing livestock and agriculture, including destocking, livestock dipping, and establishing agricultural credit banks, dipping tanks, and wool and mohair sheds. These measures led to increased production and higher prices for wool and mohair in the 1950s (Makoa, 1999; Rantšo, 2015; Uys, 1950).

Lesotho's livestock industry, dominated by wool and mohair production, primarily exports these raw materials to South Africa. The NSDP II advocates for improved production of high-value crops and livestock products, emphasising the need to review subsidy policies, develop market-responsive breeding programs, and promote commercial livestock production (GoL, 2018). To achieve these goals, the government has partnered with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through initiatives such as the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) and the Wool and Mohair Competitive Project (WaMCoP). These projects aim to improve livestock production, management, and marketing strategies, focusing on closing the gender gap in agriculture by targeting poor rural women and youth (IFAD, 2019; IFAD, 2024).

In 2018, the GoL took steps to nationalise the wool and mohair industry. The Agricultural Marketing (Wool and Mohair Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations No. 37 aimed to increase

national tax revenue, farmers' income, and employment while reducing reliance on external brokers. The regulations required that wool and mohair be prepared, brokered, traded, and auctioned in Lesotho. However, this arrangement limited farmers' ability to choose their brokers freely. In response, the High Court of Lesotho invalidated the regulations, allowing farmers to continue using their preferred broker, BKB (Khotso, 2020; Lesotho Times, 2020; WAMPP/IFAD, 2020).

Despite these efforts, comprehensive policies and programs addressing gender disparities in agriculture remain limited. Women still face challenges in accessing land, credit, extension services, and agricultural training, hindering their full participation and contribution to agricultural development. Lesotho's agricultural regulations do not adequately address gender participation, and the wool and mohair industry remain male-dominated (Rate, GDPAG, 2018; Shale, 2023).

2.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed Gender Transformative Approach as theoretical framework adopted in this study. This chapter further covered the literature reviewed on gender participation in the wool and mohair industry.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the methodology used in the study. It includes the research approach, paradigm, research design, population and sampling, and research instruments. The chapter further outlines the data collection procedure, data presentation procedure and data analysis, validity and reliability or trustworthiness and credibility and lastly ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

The study used a mixed method research approach. This approach was important to my study because it allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative factors. The quantitative data measured the extent of gender disparities in areas such as ownership, access to resources, and economic participation, providing clear statistical evidence of gaps between men and women in the industry. Meanwhile, qualitative data offered deeper insights into the social, cultural, and institutional barriers that women face, such as traditional gender roles, decision-making power, and access to training. By integrating both methods, the researcher gained a more complete understanding of the challenges women encounter and identified effective strategies to improve gender equity in the wool and mohair sector. This approach also enabled validation of findings through triangulation, leading to more credible and actionable recommendations for policy interventions and programs (Westi, et al., 2022).

This approach according to Dawadi et al., (2021); Tegan (2021); Shiyanbola, et al. (2021); Zohrabi (2013) combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research to answer a research question but Dawadi, et at., (2021) further emphasis that it is a research methodology in its own right. Shiyanola, et al. (2021) note that mixed method is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem in order to interpret data. Based on Zohrabi (2023) applying a mixed methods design provides additional insights into instrument quality and more rigorous validity evidence.

Westi, et al. (2022) notes that the mixed methods research is commonly used because it provides a strong inference when using either qualitative or quantitative approach on its own. Westi et al., (2022); Zohrabi (2023) agree that each set of methods has its own strengths and weaknesses, and each offers a particular approach to address specific types of research questions. Therefore, using mixed methods was important as Wisti et al., (2022) further argue

that it addresses different types of questions, collects different kinds of data and delivers different kinds of answers.

The rationale for mixing the two methods may include developing more effective and refined conclusions by using the results from one method to inform or shape the use of another method (Dawadi et al., 2021). Mixing in this study was done during data analysis by merging the results from both qualitative and quantitative data to show the extent to which opinions expressed in the qualitative phase were widespread in the quantitative data hence reinforcing the findings of the data sets.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. Shiyanbola, et al., (2021); Tegan (2021) argue that this design explores initial questions collected qualitatively and develops hypotheses to explore, illustrate and confirm quantitative findings. In an exploratory design, qualitative data is first collected and analysed, and themes are used to drive the development of a quantitative instrument to further explore the research problem (Berman, 2017).

The exploratory design was for that reason applicable to my study because it focuses on two phases. The first phase, qualitative data is collected from key informants at LNWMGA leadership roles to get their views, and analyses it to form themes for the second phase. The quantitative data was then collected from the wool and mohair growers who are members of the LNWMGA and analysed to confirm the finding from the first phase. The findings from the first phase were integrated by linking qualitative data analysis and quantitative data gathering.

3.3 Study Area

The study was carried out at Semonkong in Maseru district, a small town in central Lesotho, about 120km from Maseru town. In Sesotho, Semonkong means Place of Smoke, which is a reference to the huge 200m Maletsunyane Falls which is close to the town. The falls is the economic hub for tourism Lesotho with Maletsunyane Braai Fest attracting thousands of tourists during the activity. Semonkong is also renowned for producing some of the finest locally grown potatoes, owing to its loan soil, which is considered most conducive to the cultivation of high-quality potatoes (Motopi, 2024).

Map 1 Map of Lesotho

Source: WorldAtlas.com (September 27, 2024)

3.4 Population and Sampling

Casteel & Bridier (2021); Gogo & Musonda (2022); Thacker (2020) both emphasise that the population in the research is the total number of units, (individuals, organisations, events or objects) from which the sample is selected and are people who appeal to the interests of the researcher. Casteel & Bridier (2021) further noted that the population is a complete set of people with specified characteristics. While Tracker (2020) argues that in research, other characteristics will define a population.

The target population for qualitative research included members from the national committee of the LNWMGA in Maseru head office and members of the sheds committee from Semonkong. The quantitative population was wool and mohair growers who were members of

LNWMGA at Semonkong. These members included both male and female farmers at 18 years and above.

3.4.1 Sample Size

Casteel & Bridier (2021) defines sampling size as an operationalized representation of the target population and is the group of units from which the sample is recruited. The sample in this study includes 10 key informants from the LNWMGA leadership, 5 from the national committee and 5 from the 5 sheds committee in Semonkong. Also, 120 wool and mohair growers from Semonkong sheds. The adequacy of a sample size for qualitative study is described by (Gogo & Musonda, 2022) as reaching saturation at 5 to 12, and 30 is defined as the upper limit.

3.4.2 Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling for the qualitative phase of the study, whereby 10 key respondents were interviewed. This sampling as shown in Sago (2023) is a non-probability sampling technique. With this technique, participants are selected based on their unique experiences or specific characteristics related to the research question and can provide diverse and rich data to enhance the research findings. The technique is relevant to my study since I selected members of LNWMGA in the leadership from the sheds to the national committee.

On the other hand, stratified sampling was used for the quantitative phase. This sampling according to Tegan (2021) is a probability sampling technique whereby the selection of participants is in large groups divided based on their age or gender for example. The selection of members was in such a way the groups have representation of both men and women.

3.5 Research Instrument

The main instrument used consists of closed-ended questionnaires usually used in quantitative data while for qualitative data, open-ended face-to-face interviews were used for data collection (Shiyanbola, et al., 2021). Zohrabi (2013) asserts that these different ways of gathering information can supplement each other and hence boost the validity and dependability of the data. The items of the questionnaires are mainly developed based on the research objectives and research questions.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedure is essential in making sure that data is collected accurately, consistently and in a reliable manner to produce meaningful and valid results. Data collection procedure in the mixed method involves collecting data qualitatively and quantitatively. In this design Zohrabi (2013) argues that data is collected in different forms using open-ended interviews, and qualitative data is collected and analysed, forming hypotheses for quantitative data collection with close-ended questionnaires followed by analysis. The final stage involves the integration and analysis of both findings. The purpose of the second stage is to generalise and prove the results to a population and individuals in the first stage of data collection are typically not the same participants as those in the second stage (Dawadi et al., 2021).

For this study, the semi-structured interviews with open questions for the qualitative study and a structured questionnaire for the quantitative study was administered during physical meetings with respondents. The data collection followed the protocols and guidelines which Gogo and Musonda (2022) emphasise that questions should be based on the reviewed literature to answer the research questions and objectives. The procedure included a pilot testing of research questions before going into the field, which then was followed by obtaining informed consent. Finally, data was collected qualitatively and then analysed to inform the quantitative data collection.

3.7 Data Presentation and Data Analysis

Data was presented using text, themes, tables or graphs to provide clear reporting of my findings. Cloutier & Ravasi (2021) emphasise that tables for example, are useful in summarising large data to address all issues while graphs give trends and evidence of the data to describe the research questions and objectives of the study. For qualitative strands, open-ended interviews were used to collect data therefore texts, themes and patterns. Data presentation for the quantitative strands tends to be visual and mostly graphical. Tables, graphs and bar charts were used in the graphical presentation of quantitative data.

Analysis in design is conducted in three stages: analyse after the primary qualitative phase, after the secondary quantitative phase, and at the integration phase that connects the two strands of data and extends the initial qualitative exploratory findings (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The study mixed the findings and the results of the two strands as they integrate during the first

phase analysis and second phase data collection and analysis and as they are presented in Chapter four.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis as noted by Dawit (2020) is the process of changing or transforming raw data into useful facts and concepts with the main intention of obtaining information that responds to the research questions of the study and be interpreted either qualitatively or quantitatively. In the mixed-methods approach data analyses involve distinctly qualitative data using qualitative methods and quantitative data using quantitative methods. This process also involves merging both databases using approaches that integrate the qualitative and quantitative results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

The interviews were used to collect data, and then the researcher classified and analysed the data, with qualitative data being transcribed, classified and categorised using thematic analysis. The quantitative data were assigned numeric values to each response in the database and sanitised, correcting data entry errors after collection to ensure meaningful results. The quantitative data were also analysed using the SPSS statistical package. Graphs and charts were created using SPSS for a clear and simple presentation of the data.

3.8.1 Qualitative Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis for qualitative research. Kiger and Varpio (2020) argue that this method of analysis involves trying to find something in people's opinions, views, experiences and knowledge, experiences or values from a set of qualitative data. This method of data analysis allowed the researcher to formulate a hypothesis from the LNWMGA population using the selected knowledgeable & experienced participants to give a general view who in this case are the key informants from the association head office and the district offices. Qualitative analysis involves thematic analysis that identifies themes to describe and organise or interpret aspects of the topic within the data. Software such as Atlas.ti was used to assist this process.

3.8.2 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data, on the other hand, Statistical analysis was used to analyse data using hypotheses informed by qualitative findings. These accurate parameters of a small population from qualitative findings were taken further using inferential statistics to get a great method of

analysis, the researcher used descriptive statistics to get approximations of a much larger population's statistics. To analyse quantitative data, SPSS was used to perform inferential statistics which summarised, compared, or tested the data. Mishra et al. (2019) argue that mixed-methods analysis combines, compares, or contrasts the quantitative and qualitative results through integration or meta-analysis. Tables and graphs were used to display and communicate the analysis and draw conclusions and implications.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

To evaluate the quality of the research, reliability and validity were concepts used. Middleton (2019) asserts that they indicate how well a method, technique or test measures something for valid and reliable data and findings. Grand-Guillaume-Perrenoud et al., (2023), Middleton (2019) and Zohrabi (2013) agree that reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is about the accuracy of a measure. However, Middleton (2019) argues that although reliability and validity are closely related, they mean different things. A measurement can be reliable but not always valid.

3.9.1 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Phase

In qualitative research, consistency is key, for it provides logic, accuracy, or fairness. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher ensured that the results are credible (Noble & Smith, 2015), that is they are true, credible and believable (Kortjens & Moser, 2018). This was achieved through triangulation where the researcher collected data from multiple sources, at different times and on many sites.

Also, the researcher ensured that the findings were consistent overtime and achieved by making sure the findings were dependable through data collection. It includes an evaluation of the study's participants, interpretation and recommendations. Forero et al. (2018) highlighted that dependability is the extent to ensure that the findings of a qualitative inquiry are repeatable if the inquiry occurred within the same cohort of participants, orders and context.

In addition, the results were confirmed or corroborated by the supervisor to make sure they were accurate, relevant and meaningful. This was achieved through consultation work with the supervisor to check the data. Then data was analysed to confirm if it is correct and make corrections where necessary.

Lastly, the researcher had to make sure that the research findings and interpretations can be relevant and applicable to other contests or settings beyond the research context. This is referred to as transferability and Forero et al. (2018); Zohrabi (2013) come to the conclusion that it involves the ability to generalise or transfer the knowledge gained from a study to similar situations, populations, or settings, thus enhancing the potential for broader understanding and practical utility.

3.9.2 Validity and Reliability in Quantitative Phase

The quantitative data can provide valuable insights and evidence to the research only if the results are reliable and valid. Reliability for this phase refers to the consistency of certain measurements overtime, and validity tests whether these measurements measure what they are supposed to measure (Zohrabi, 2013). To assess the degree of reliability, the findings from the research were replicated consistently with the consultation of the supervisor. In testing validity, various strategies were employed; such as pilot testing of the quantitative data, expert review, and statistical analyses to assess and enhance the validity of my studies (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020)

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Equally important were the ethical considerations in research. Bhandari (2021) defines ethical considerations as a set of principles that guide your research designs and practices. Scientists and researchers must always adhere to a certain code of conduct when collecting data from people. To be able to conduct this study, I obtained approval from the NUL Department of Development Studies & LNWMGA and adhered to their code of conduct. Before data collection, the researcher requested consent from participants to administer the interviews and questionnaire. The respondents were informed about the importance of the study and that they were free to choose to participate. Furthermore, the respondent's identification was kept anonymous for credibility. Finally, the study adhered to academic code, did not plagiarise and avoided research misconduct to avoid falsifying data, manipulating data analyses, or misrepresenting results in research reports.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It covers the research approach and research design. The population and sampling of the study were also presented involving; population, sample size, and sampling techniques. Furthermore, the study included data collection methods and various data analysis. In order to justify the findings, the study finally presented the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Findings and Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses qualitative findings and quantitative results from the data collected from the LNWMGA key informants and Semonkong wool and mohair growers who were members of the association. The findings are presented using themes for qualitative data. The chapter starts by presenting the profile of the participants in the wool and mohair industry in the study. This is followed by the data relating to the first question which discusses the stage/levels of gender participation in wool and mohair and its value chain. Research question two is presented which investigates the contribution of wool and mohair to smallholder farmers' livelihoods. The chapter also presents the initiatives and policies that promote gender participation in wool and mohair and its value chain. Lastly, it present and analyses the relationship between the personal socio-demographic attributes and the perceptions of the participants on gender participation in different stages, livelihood outcomes and policies that promote gender participation.

4.1 Participants' Demographic Profile

In the area of livestock, women's participation and empowerment are contested when it comes to the demographic profile of the participants. While some studies show that there are more men than women some studies suggest that in terms of participation and empowerment, both genders are empowered and equally participate (Andersson et al., 2022). For this study, 10 key informants in the leadership positions within LNWMGA were interviewed. For confidentiality, participants were labelled P1, P2 etc. to represent different participants in the study. Table 1 presents the profile of the key participants showing their duties and socio-demographic information.

Table 1 Key Informants' Demographic Profile

Key informant	Participants	Sex	Age	Highest Education	Marital Status
Deputy Chairman	P1	M	51	High School Form D	Married
Committee Advisor	P2	M	63	No Formal Education	Married
Office Manager	P3	F	68	Bachelor Degree	Widowed
Treasurer	P4	M	49	Primary	Married
Secretary	P5	M	51	Primary	Married
Secretary-District & Shed 1	P6	F	46	Primary	Married
Chairman Shed 2	P7	M	41	Primary	Married
Treasurer shed 3	P8	M	47	Primary	Married
Vice-Chairman Shed 4	P9	M	42	High School	Married
Chairman Shed 5	P10	M	45	High School	Married

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.1.1 Gender

Studies confirm that the wool and mohair industry is accessible to both men and women without explicit restrictions on participation (Quisumbing & Doss, 2021). The qualitative findings indicated that, the LNWMGA strived to ensure inclusivity with open membership to all genders. However, the findings also revealed that the association had more male members as compared to women. This limitation persists due to cultural norms, which put men as

custodians of animals, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to challenge and transform these entrenched norms (Pitikoe, 2016).

One participant said: *"We have free membership for both men and women willing to participate in this industry. However, the association still reports high numbers of male participants which is influenced by our culture." P3*

Similarly, the quantitative findings also revealed that the wool and mohair industry had more male farmers compared to women as demonstrated in Table 2: (76.7%) male and (23.3%) female.

Table 2 Gender

What is your gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	92	76.7	76.7	76.7
	Female	28	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2024

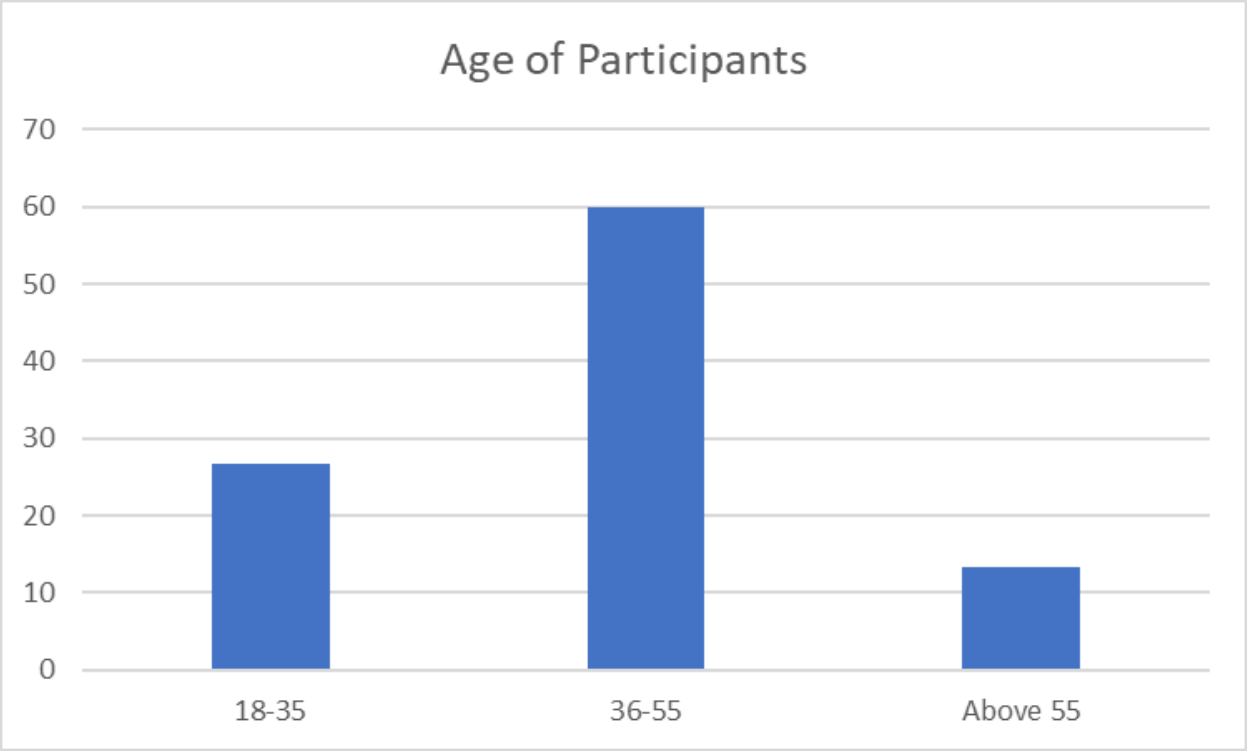
4.1.2 Age of Participants

The key participants also stated that the individuals involved in the wool and mohair industry within the LNWMGA were generally middle-aged and older with a significant presence of young individuals.

P5 indicates that: *"The age breakdown of members is populated by middle to elderly people. Although they all participate, the middle-aged and younger members seem to take the lead as they have energy and strength to perform most tasks."*

Likewise, the quantitative finding also presented that within the wool and mohair industry, especially the LNWMGA there were generally more middle-aged people (60.0%), followed by older members (26.7%) and then 13.3% young individuals as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Age of Participants



Source: Field Data, 2024

4.1.3 Educational Level

Literature shows that smallholder farmers were generally not educated (Njobe & Kaaria, 2015) Similarly the findings showed that in the wool and mohair industry in Lesotho, the participants were not educated as many started farming at a young age (Rantšo, 2022; Moiloa et al., 2020).

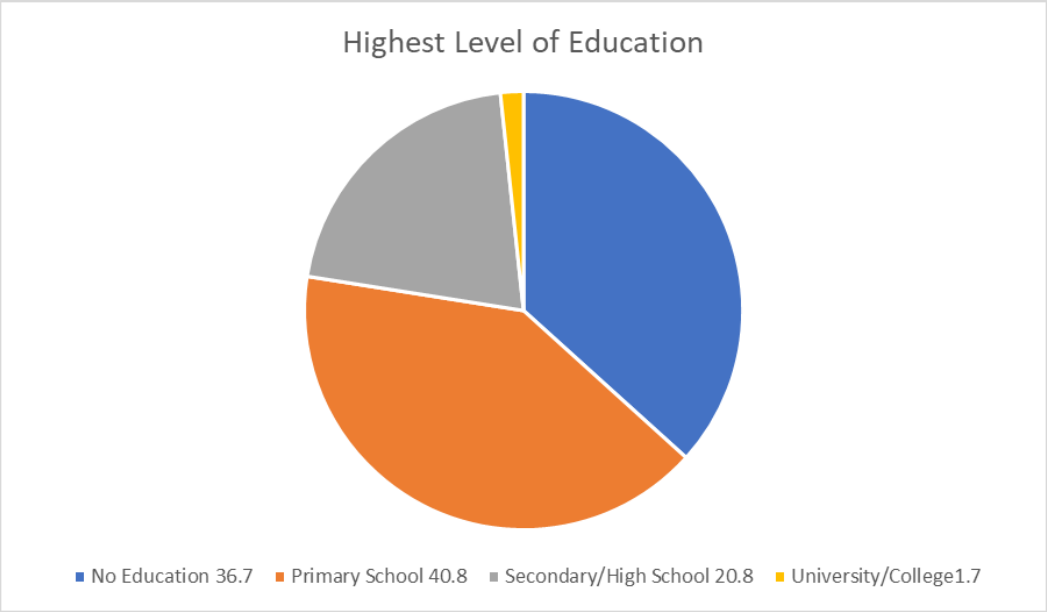
One participant highlighted that, *"Our members are generally not educated, but in recent years we have seen an increase in educated people joining the business. The reason could be, that most men never attended school because they were employed as herd boys from an early age and paid with goats and sheep. Their participation in the industry started with them having their own livestock" (P2).*

The participants added that education affects participation as members who were educated usually have other professional commitments which can restrict their participation. On the other hand, those who do not have formal education devote most of their time to participating in the industry and evolve with experience.

Similarly, the quantitative analysis showed that the majority of the wool and mohair within the LNWMGA did not have formal education. Figure 2 demonstrated that 36.7% of farmers did

not have formal education, 40.8% had primary education, 20.8% of participants had secondary/high school and 1.7% were those with university/college as the highest level of education.

Figure 2 Educational Level



Source: Field Data, 2024

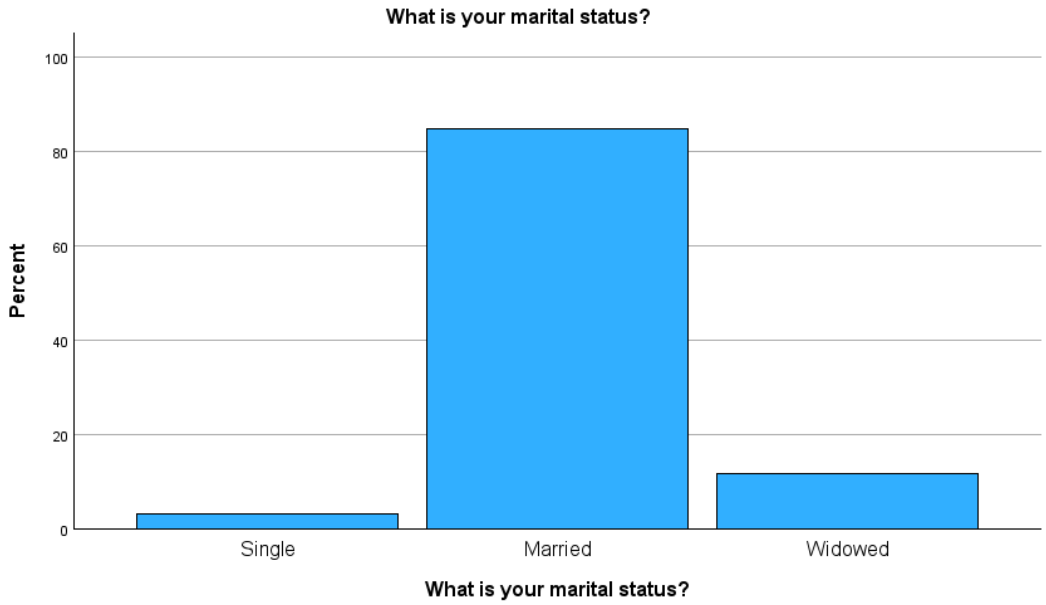
4.1.4 Respondents' Marital Status

The key informants all observed that the majority of participants were married. P6 indicated that: *"Majority of the farmers have families. For men, if the wife dies, they take another wife. While women farmers are usually widowed or some the husband is in the mines or in construction companies."*

> *P2 added that marital status influences participation, particularly for women. Generally, women face additional challenges balancing household responsibilities with industry participation. It influences their availability and the type of work they can perform, particularly for women who balance household responsibilities with their roles in the industry.*

In the same way, Figure 3 shows that 85% wool and mohair growers were married, while 11.7% were widowed and lastly only 3.3% of them were single, confirming the qualitative findings that the majority of participants in the wool and mohair industry were married.

Figure 3 Marital Status



Source: Field Data, 2024

4.2 The level of Participation of men and women in the Wool and Mohair Industry

Participation in the wool and mohair industry includes many issues as it involves mere numbers determining equal participation, which had two sub-themes: participation in leadership positions within the industry and its association and participation in different stages of the value chain. Concerning equal participation in terms of numbers, studies show unequal participation between men and women in the wool and mohair industry.

The findings are also coherent with the theory that supports the study in that Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) aims at addressing roles, norms, and power dynamics while promoting changes in gender relations, opportunities, and resources which are the root cause that limit wool and mohair industry to promote equal gender participation in different stages. According to Wong (2019), change in this approach involves tackling the root causes of gender inequality and allowing equality in roles performed by both men and women.

The key informants stated that men participate more as compared to women. One participant shares the view that *"there is a huge difference in the level of participation between men and women, as men participate more as compared to women". P6*

These views were confirmed by the quantitative findings in Table 3. The findings show that 82.5 % of respondents believe men participate more than women, while 16.7% indicated that both men and women participate equally and 0.8% believe women participate more than men.

Table 3 Equal Participation in Wool and Mohair Industry

Do you think men and women participate equally in wool and mohair within LNWMGA?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes both men and women	20	16.7	16.7	16.7
	No, men participate more than women	99	82.5	82.5	99.2
	No, women partocipate more than men	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.2.1 Participation in Leadership Positions

When it comes to participation in leadership positions within the organisation the findings revealed several categories like culture, fear and household responsibilities. Most of the leadership positions are occupied by men because they were initially the custodians of livestock, therefore they outnumber women and have more experience putting them in leadership positions.

Literature states that men's domination in leadership positions was influenced by gender norms which puts men as head in decision-making positions (Pitikoe, 2016). Both qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that being a man puts one in high leadership positions while being a woman puts one in a low position. One key participant summarised this difference by saying:

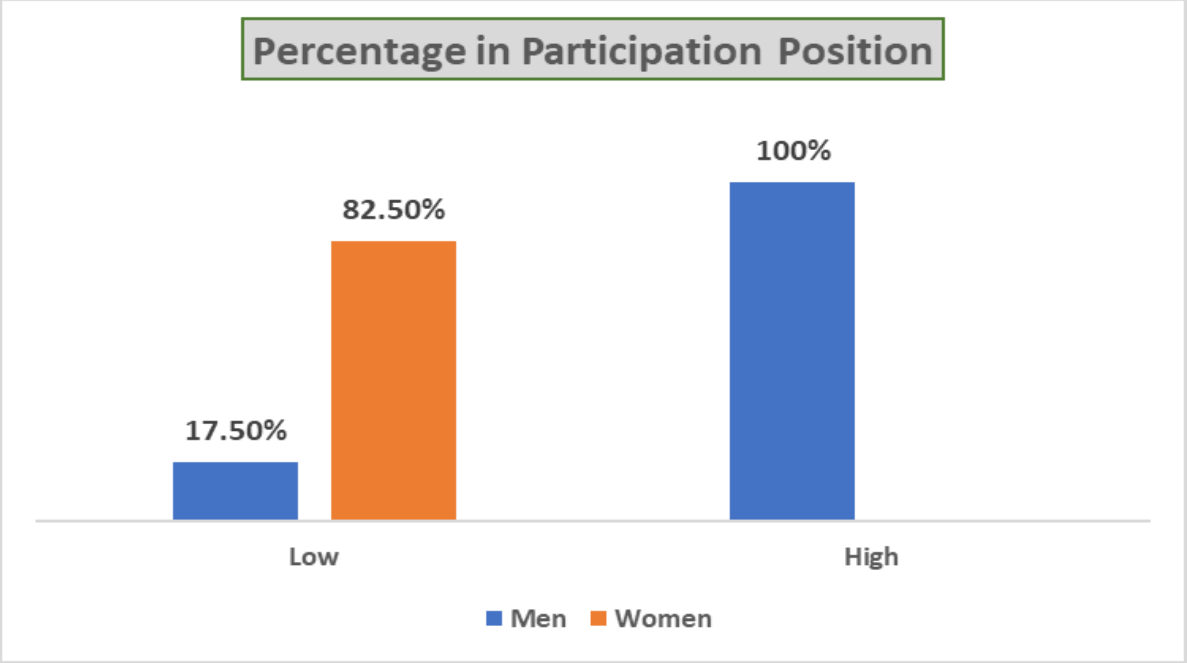
> *Men are more likely to hold leadership positions, driven by their greater participation in the physically demanding aspects of the industry and societal expectations of male leadership. Women's leadership is less common, hindered by fear to lead men which is influenced by culture, their household responsibilities and a lack of confidence or encouragement to step into these roles. These disparities are common but not*

acknowledged within the association, and efforts are being made to encourage more equitable participation (P3).

Key participants noted that cultural norms and gender roles influence participation. Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping gender roles and participation in the wool and mohair industry. One participant observed that: *"Traditional views on gender dictate that men should be the primary breadwinners and leaders, while women are expected to manage the household and take on supportive roles." (P6)*

The quantitative findings also concur that more men participate in leadership positions as compared to than women as shown in Figure 4 below. When asked whether being a man or woman puts one in a higher or lower position, all the respondents (100%) indicated that being a man puts one in a higher position. While 82.5% of the participants believed that being a woman puts one in a lower position within the organisation and 17.5% indicated that being a woman puts one in a high position.

Figure 4 Leadership Position



Source: Field Data, 2024

4.2.2 Participation in Wool and Mohair Value Chain

The wool and mohair value chain in Lesotho comprises of few stages that are not well developed like other agricultural products (Mokhethi et al. 2015). It includes production (rearing of animals), processing (shearing, sorting and classing) and marketing of wool and mohair because they have decision-making powers (Thakur et al., 2023). The qualitative data showed that men's participation dominated the value chain, especially production, transportation and marketing.

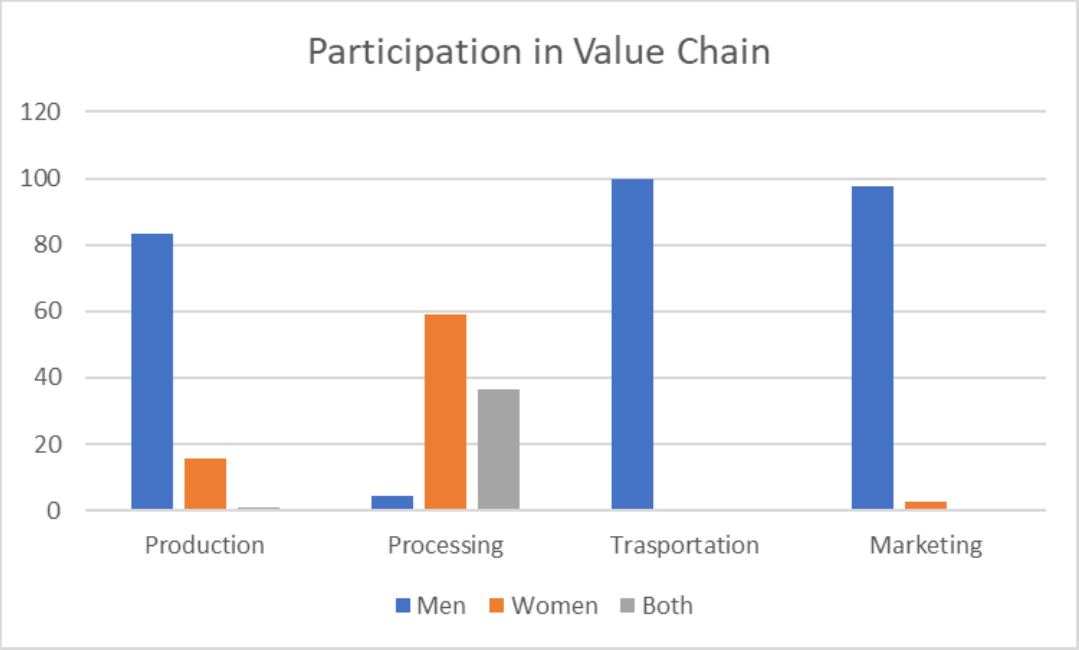
Men predominantly control the high-value stages of the value chain, such as livestock ownership, wool shearing, and market sales, while women are more involved in lower-value, labour-intensive roles like animal care and wool processing, which often go unrecognised. The GTA framework highlights the need to challenge these entrenched gender roles by promoting women's ownership of assets, equal access to markets, and participation in decision-making processes. It calls for policy interventions and structural reforms to ensure women benefit equitably throughout the value chain, transforming traditional power dynamics and fostering gender equality in the industry (FAO, 2023).

> *"Men participate in most tasks in the value chain, especially physically intensive activities like rearing animals, shearing, transportation and marketing. Women, on the other hand, are more involved in supportive and administrative tasks that are less physically demanding in the processing stages," (P10).*

One of the key participants added that *"these roles are not strictly enforced by the association but are a reflection of broader societal expectations and norms" (P2).*

Similarly, the quantitative data revealed unequal participation between men and women in the wool and mohair value chain. Figure 5 shows participation of men, women and or both on production at: 83.3%, 15.8% and 0.8 respectively. Participation in processing was 4.2% for men, 59.2% for women and 36.7% for both genders. Furthermore, all participants interviewed for this study said women do not participate in transportation, thus 100% of men participate in section and lastly, 97.5% of men participate in marketing while women make only 2.5%.

Figure 5 Value Chain



Source: Field Data, 2024

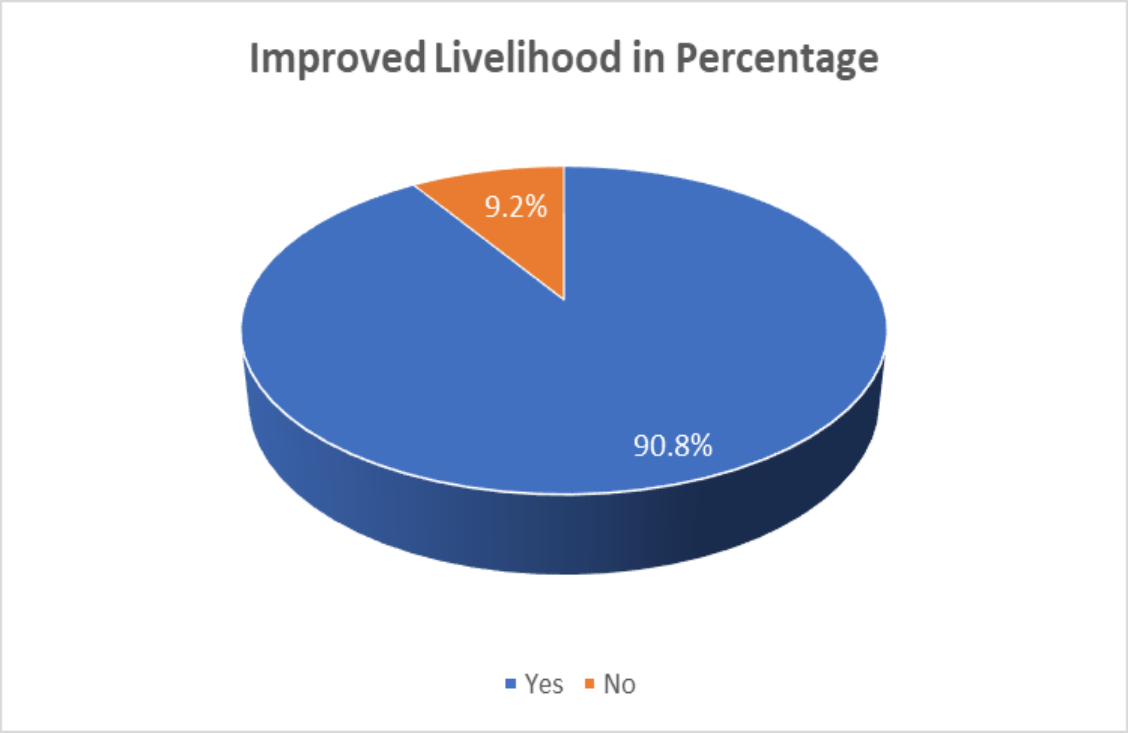
4.3 Livelihood Improvement and Participation

The study investigated how participation in the wool and mohair industry influenced livelihoods. The theme that emerged from the second research question was livelihood outcome to bring in an understanding of how the industry contributes to the economic and social well-being of individuals and communities involved in the wool and mohair industry. The key informants stated the wool and mohair industry is a pivotal sector that significantly influences the livelihoods of its participants.

One participant highlighted that: *"As wool and mohair growers we have experienced livelihood improvement, particularly changes in the quality of life. These, including social well-being, standard of living and overall enhancement of living conditions". (P3)*

The key informants' response was confirmed by the quantitative findings whereby 120 wool and mohair growers were asked if their involvement in the industry improved their livelihood. 90.2% of the respondents said engaging in the industry improved their livelihood since they were able to cover their basic needs and enjoy a luxurious lifestyle. On the other hand, 9.8% said their livelihood has not improved.

Figure 6 Improved Livelihood



Source: Field Data, 2024

The findings revealed that participation in the wool and mohair industry also extends broader livelihood outcomes. The categories that emerged to support the theme of livelihood outcomes were: income generation, job creation and social capital.

On the category of income generation, one participant's emphasis was as follows: *"Income generation stands as one of the most critical outcomes for participants in the wool and mohair industry. The sector serves as a primary source of income for many families, offering financial stability and supporting day-to-day needs". (P3)*

The results showed that the revenue earned from wool and mohair sales enables families to afford better living conditions and invest in essential services such as education and healthcare. One participant asserts that: *"The income often translates to sending children to school, thereby improving educational attainment and future opportunities (P8).*

This view was affirmed by P3 who stated that:

> *The profits gained from wool and mohair can be reinvested into other business ventures, promoting economic diversification and resilience. This ability to diversify*

income streams is crucial for reducing vulnerability to market fluctuations and economic shocks.

The findings also revealed that participation in the wool and mohair industry also extends to broader community development. Key participants noted that the economic benefits generated by the industry contribute to local economies, fostering economic activities that benefit the entire community. P1 asserts that *"most growers have revested income generated from the industry into other businesses which led to improved infrastructure such as better super-markets in their communities and further enhancing the quality of life for all residents."*

Another category that emerged from data analysis was job creation in which participants attested that wool and mohair industry offered a wide range of employment opportunities across different stages of production and value addition from: production, processing, marketing and sales and supporting services. These diverse opportunities ensure that a broad spectrum of skills and expertise is utilised by various demographic groups within the association.

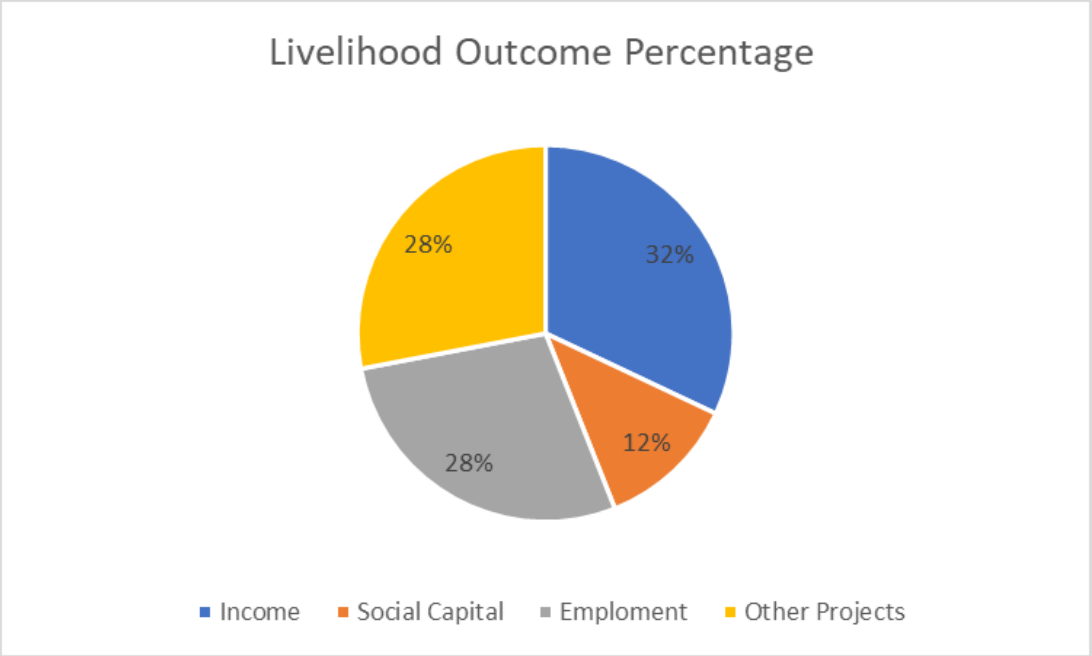
One participant stated that:

The wool and mohair industry is located in the rural areas where it employs high number of herd boys. For example, one farmer can hire more than one herd-boy to care for their livestock both at home and in cattle post (motebong). (P9)

P5 added that *"As farmers, we get many benefits by participating in this business, now we drive beautiful cars. Apart from the fact that it is a business, it is also a hobby where we socialise and compete during shows."*

Likewise, the quantitative findings confirmed that participation in wool and mohair improved livelihoods. Participants were asked to pick any form of improvement they received from participating in wool and mohair which we categorise into the following livelihood outcomes as shown in Figure 7: 32% of respondents picked generation of income as one of their livelihood outcomes, while only 12% picked social capital. Further, 28% of respondents stated that they created employment and lastly, 28% were able to finance other projects.

Figure 7 Livelihood Outcome



Source: Field Data, 2024

The ultimate goal of participation in the wool and mohair industry is to improve livelihood (Rocchi, 2016). The literature confirms that wool and mohair provide an important source of income, nutrition, livelihood security and cultural resilience for many rural households. Sheep and goats contribute to livelihoods through the production of meat, milk, wool and mohair and other by-products (Adams et al., 2021; Danso-Abbeam et al., 2024; Najjar & Baruah, 2023; Rocchi, 2016; Shivakumara, et al., 2020).

It is further highlighted in the studies that participating in the wool and mohair industry enables growers to diversify their sources of income, reducing their dependence on livestock production alone (Nkonki, 2008). This diversification includes; crop production, mining, entrepreneurship, and teaching. Engaging in these activities Mokhethi et al (2015) confirm that it helps protect growers against market fluctuations and other risks that may affect agricultural production.

4.4 Policies and Initiatives

The policies and initiatives are another theme of the study. Both the qualitative and quantitative findings showed that some of the participants believed that there are policies that promote gender equality and empowerment within the country. While the majority believed such policies did not exist within the LNWMGA. One key participant explained this by saying: *"The*

association does not have any policy that promotes gender participation or equality. The constitution is our road map and it has embedded the principle of equality which does not discriminate on any gender." P3

Consequently, Table 4 below demonstrates the quantitative findings which revealed that from the total of people surveyed, 71.7% believed that there were policies in Lesotho which promote gender equality, while 28.3% stated that they do not know of such policies. Concerning LNWMGA, 91.7% of the participants stated that they do not know the gender policies within the association and 8.3% of the participants stated that there are no gender policies within the LNWMGA.

Table 4 Policies Promoting Gender Equality

Policies in Lesotho Percentage		**Policies within LNWMGA Percentage**	
Yes	71.7%	No	8.3%
I do not know	28.3%	I do not know	91.7%

Source: Field Data 2024

The key informants stated that initiatives within the association encompass comprehensive strategies that include training and capacity building, strategic implementation of programs, collaboration among stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluation. Together, these initiatives work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable industry.

The participants shared the sentiment that training and capacity building have equipped some of their members with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the wool and mohair industry.

One participant highlighted that:

> *"Our members have received training programs on technical skills in areas such as animal husbandry, shearing, and product processing, along with business and financial management training. This was done in such a way that members, regardless of gender, have the tools they need to contribute effectively to the industry." P5*

The key informants agreed that knowledge transfer is crucial for enabling farmers to stay competitive and sustainable in the long term. They further conclude that all their programs and or initiatives are gender inclusive

P2 attested that

> *"Access to training and information resources empowers participants to adopt better farming practices, resulting in improved product quality and higher sales. Some members have received training on breeding, climate-smart rangeland management; improved production and management of livestock; and improved handling and marketing strategies for wool and mohair fibres which were facilitated in collaboration with organisations like WAMPP."*

Additionally, the participant confirmed that "*Our constitution is clear; it does not discriminate on any gender. We contribute equal membership and therefore we get the same benefits regardless of one's gender." P4*

Another category that emerged from data analysis was that the association collaborated with the organisation to promote gender participation. P2 elaborated in this manner: *"We work with organisations such as IFAD on the WAMPP which empowered some women and youth to increase their participation in the wool and mohair sub-sectors such as spinning and weaving."*

P6 further shared the sentiments:

> *The association offers programs and initiatives that provide resources, like subsidising ram sales, to be paid in instalments by its members, donations by organisations such as WAMPP with rams to selected women performing well and the animal feed from LENASU significantly enhance the capacity of small-scale farmers.*

To ensure the success of all the initiatives within LNWMGA, participants shared that they monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. One of the participants, P2 explained it like this:

> *We make follow-ups from the grassroots of the association, from our sheds, district committees' monthly reports and observe the progress during the show. Also, we work together with the Ministry of Agriculture through the Department of Livestock extension workers (Basupisi ba temo) to follow up and give expertise.*

The quantitative findings also revealed that the majority of wool and mohair growers received training, however, the number of members who received skill development and initiative was not that significant as demonstrated in Table 5.

Tables 5 Initiatives

Benefits for Participating	**Frequency Out of 120**	**Percentage**
Training	118	60%
Skill Development e.g., shearing and sorting	28	14%
Any form of initiative e.g., ram, animal feed etc	52	26%
Total	198	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 5 shows that 60% of the participants received general training as part of the initiatives by the association, 14% of the participants were equipped with different skills such as (shearing and classing) and 26% received different forms of initiatives that included animal feed and ram for improved breeding.

Policies and initiatives in the wool and mohair industry boost participation of all genders but women in particular (Subedi, 2008). However, Shale (2023) argues that Lesotho's wool and mohair industry does not have specific policies on gender equality in wool and mohair. The findings are in line with the theory that guides the study which asserts that inclusive and better participation, both men and women, should be equipped with skills to improve: this includes training programs. The theory further states that there is a need for gender-specific initiatives to empower and encourage women to participate in wool and mohair (McDougall et al., 2021).

4.5 Challenges and Barriers

Confidence and fear were significant psychological barriers that affect participation. P7 said: *"Many women lack the confidence to take on leadership roles. This lack of confidence is often rooted in societal norms that undervalue women's contributions and discourage them from pursuing positions of influence."*

P3 also highlighted that *"Women lack confidence in one another and they trust men for leadership positions as compared to fellow women."*

Other participants stated that fear of failure or criticism further inhibits their active involvement and willingness to take on new challenges within the industry. Some participants agree that time constraints are a major barrier for participation, especially for women who are often burdened with multiple responsibilities.

P6 explains it this way:

> *"Balancing household chores, childcare, and industry-related activities is challenging and limits the time women can invest in wool and mohair production. Men, while also facing time constraints, due to commitment to other professions, typically have more flexibility as they are less likely to be encumbered with domestic responsibilities."*

The findings relate to the literature where Rantšo (2015) emphasises that the common obstacle to increased production in the wool and mohair industry is stock theft. His emphasis is supported by AgriSETA (2018), reporting that livestock theft exceeds R750 million per annum, for both small and large stock. Dzimba & Matooane (2005) and Gumede, et al., (2018) argue that women farmers are more vulnerable to most challenges but stock theft in particular. This is influenced by their lack of strength to retaliate during attacks. Although there are some challenges, Khotso (2020) reports that the economic significance of these industries underscores their importance in both domestic and international markets.

4.6 Relationship between the Demographic Attributes

The last research question of the study was to investigate whether there was a significant association between the demographic profile of the participants and their views concerning certain issues using the chi-square. The views tested were on equal participation, stages of participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives. The alpha value (0.05) was used to test the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis can be rejected if the chi-square test statistic is less than the critical value. Table 6 presents a summary of the Chi Square test of association performed using SPSS Version.

Table 6 Chi Square Value and Demographics

Participation	Gender	Age	Education	Marital Status
Equally Participation	0.122	0.433	0.222	0.553
Stages of Participation	0.955	0.444	0.007	0.879
Livelihood Improvement	0.193	0.002	0.098	0.770
Policies & Initiatives	0.746	0.013	0.860	0.310

4.6.1 Gender

Table 6 shows the cross-tab analysis for variables determining whether there is a significant association between gender and the above-mentioned variables: equal participation, stages of participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives. The chi-square value for all the variables is greater than (0.05), therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis concluding that there is no association, since they are not statistically significant.

4.6.2 Age

The chi square test has also been used to measure the association between age and the following variables (equal participation, stages of participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives). Table 4.5. Show that the chi square value for livelihood improvement and policies is (0.002) and (0.013) respectively, which is less than the alpha value (0.05). At the (0.05) level of significance, a p-value for (0.002 and 0.013) is significant suggesting that we reject the null hypothesis concluding that there was a significant association between age and the selected variable. However, there is no association between the remaining variables (equal participation and stages of participation) and age since they are above (0.05). Therefore, they are not statistically significant.

4.6.3 Education

A cross tab analysis was run to test to determine the association between growers' educational level and the following variables: equal participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives. The chi square value for stages of participation (0.007) is less than the alpha value of (0.05). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is an association with education. The p-value for other variables is above (0.05), therefore there is no association since they are not statistically significant.

4.6.4 Marital Status

Table 4.5 also shows the cross-tab analysis which determines whether there was a relationship between marital status and the following variables (equal participation, stages of participation, livelihood improvement and policies and initiatives). The p-value for all variables is greater than the standard alpha value (0.05) meaning they are not statistically significant. We therefore conclude that they do not have an association with marital status.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented, analysed and interpreted qualitative and quantitative data from the LNWMGA leadership and quantitative data from Semonkong wool and mohair growers who were members of the association. Firstly, the demographic profile of respondents have been presented. The chapter has further presented the results of gender participation in the wool and mohair industry within LNWMGA using the research question. The results were compared using the mixed method approach and the findings of the qualitative phase were widespread within the larger sample of the quantitative phase to determine whether the opinion expressed in both the phases of the study were associated. With the use of the Chi Square test, the findings reveal that there is no significant association between some of the variables and demographic profile except age which had the significant association with improved livelihood and policies, while education had a significant relationship with stages of participation.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the main findings and results are presented as per the research question. It also presents the conclusion based on the findings and lastly, it presents the recommendations.

5.1 Stages of Participation

The first research question wanted to investigate participation in different stages. The findings indicated that both men and women participate in the wool and mohair industry within the LNWMGA. However, males dominated the participation in this sector. Data from both sets of data revealed that the majority of wool and mohair growers were middle-aged and were married. The findings also presented that education did not have much of an influence on participation as most farmers were not educated but experience contributes to and influences their participation.

The findings showed that factors such as culture and gendered roles restrict equal participation of men and women in the wool and mohair industry. In Basotho culture, men are automatically custodians of the livestock while women are responsible for households and the general welfare of the family. Even within the association men perform labour-intensive tasks which in return help gain experience and at advantage to be elected in leadership positions, On the other hand, women take tasks which require less physical strength and a small portion of women occupy leadership positions.

5.2 Livelihood Improvements

The second research question investigated the extent to which participation affects the lifestyle of wool and mohair growers. The findings revealed that participating in the wool and mohair industry contributes to the livelihood of growers despite challenges like diseases, weather conditions, theft, and sales dropping. The majority of participants stated that engaging in this industry resulted in livelihood outcomes such as income: which afforded them education for their children, job creation and financing other projects such as crop production and supermarkets. However, gender analysis reveals that men benefit more than women, primarily due to greater access to resources such as land, livestock, and financial services, as well as decision-making power. Men own the majority of the livestock, which gives them control over

production and market access, allowing them to capture most of the profits. Women, despite contributing significantly through labour in animal care and wool processing, often face barriers such as limited ownership of resources and exclusion from decision-making roles, restricting their economic benefits (Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

5.3 Policies and Initiatives

The third research question analysed specific policies that promote gender participation. The finding confirmed from both the qualitative and quantitative data that the LNWMGA did not have policies that promote gender participation and empowerment, however, there were plans to incorporate them into their developmental goal. The quantitative phase showed that 89% of participants believed that there are no gender policies and only 45% of participants had benefited from the initiatives within the association.

5.4 Relationship between Attributes and Stages of Participation, Livelihood Improvement and Policies and Initiatives

The study also intended to show the relationship between the attribute and the perceptions of the participants on gender participation in different stages, livelihood outcomes and policies that promote gender participation as the last question. The findings revealed that most variables were not associated with participation of wool and mohair growers. However, two demographic variables of age and educational level were significantly associated with improved livelihood and policies and initiatives (0.002 and 0.013) and stages of participation (0.007) respectively.

5.5 Conclusion

The study concluded that the wool and mohair industry, particularly within the LNWMGA, exhibits distinct gender-based participation patterns influenced by various socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors. Despite the significant involvement of both men and women in this industry, there remained notable disparities in their roles, access to resources, and decision-making power.

Interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in Lesotho have been made, including Development Policy 2018-2030 and Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006. However, there are no comprehensive policies and programs within LNWMGA that address gender equality further increasing disparities within the industry. Therefore, strongly agree that the

Lesotho wool and mohair industry does not promote gender participation. The findings were in line with the reviewed literature which proves that in many Asian and African countries, women are primarily responsible for small ruminants such as goats and sheep but despite their significant involvement, they often lack control over resources and decision-making powers which are in reserved for men (Batool et al., 2014; Dan & Kim, 2022; Rusawo et al., 2022).

Additionally, the finding aligns with the Gender Transformation Approach which affirms that addressing gender disparities in the wool and mohair industry requires challenging traditional norms, empowering women, advocating for policy changes, and promoting inclusiveness through social change. The women and men involved can "together build" for more integrated or inclusive improvements in their participation and livelihoods in the wool and mohair industry ultimately contributing to a more equitable and sustainable industry.

5.6 Recommendations

To address unequal participation in wool and mohair, the association needs to implement effective empowerment strategies. These strategies include providing targeted capacity-building programs that include training and workshops to enhance their skills and knowledge. In addition, empower, support and advocate for women's participation in different stages particularly leadership in decision-making roles. Additionally, creating supportive policies that promote gender equality and equal access to resources to create a more supportive environment for participation for both men and women. Lastly, promote collaborative efforts with organisations that advocate for gender inclusivity to further strengthen the initiatives and ensure their successful implementation.

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Appendix 1

Gender and Demographic Information:

1. What is your gender?

. Male

a. Female

b. Do not want to say

2. What is your age?

. 18-35

a. 36-55

b. Over 55

3. What is your highest level of education completed?

. No formal education

a. Primary

b. Secondary/high school

c. University/college

4. What is your marital status?

. Single

a. Married

b. Widowed

5. How does any of the following attributes affect your participation in wool and mohair?

.	Low	Age	Gender	Education	Marital status
a.	Moderate	Age	Gender	Education	Marital status
b.	High	Age	Gender	Education	Marital status

Stage of Participation in the Wool and Mohair Industry:

6. Do you think men and women participate equally in wool and mohair within LNWMGA?

. Yes (both men and women participate equally)

a. No: (No men participate more than women)

(No women participate more men)

b. I do not know

7. In this association do you think being a man or a woman puts you in a high or low position of participation?

. Low position women men

a. High position women men

8. In the wool and mohair value chain where do you think men or women participate more?

.	Production	Women	Men	Both
a.	Processing	Women	Men	Both
b.	Transportation	Women	Men	Both
c.	Marketing	Women	Men	Both

Contribution of participation to livelihood.

9. Does engaging in wool and mohair improve your livelihood?

. Yes

a. No

10. Which of the following livelihood outcomes are you able to have for participation in the wool and mohair?

. Generate income

a. Increased (social capital e.g., friends, business partners, etc)

b. Create employment (for family members and other)

c. Financed other business (other projects e.g., farming, business)

11. Do you think there are policies that promote gender empowerment and equality?

.	Country	Yes	No	Don’t know
a.	Within the LNWMGA	Yes	No	Don’t know

12. Have you personally benefited from any of the following initiatives, programs and or activities within the LNWMGA?

. Training on rangeland and livestock management

a. Skill development on different tasks

b. Any form of donation (e.g., ram)