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Analysis of Personal and Cultural Beliefs Related to Organ Donation in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This article aimed to perceive and analyze the obstacles and demanding situations dealing with the organ donation manner in Saudi Arabia, and to observe how cultural factors affect society's outlook and choices concerning organ donation, as organ donation contributes significantly to improving public health and saving the lives of people who be afflicted by Incurable sicknesses. Through using the experimental approach and the usage of the questionnaire as an examination tool among the residents of KSA during 2023, this cross-sectional study showed that lack of awareness and information are principle obstacles to organ donation in KSA. This is due to personal and cultural beliefs connected to habits and traditions, and we found that the doctor is responsible for the case of brain death and the organ transplant coordinator must be fully aware of these matters, as well as they must have a spirit of inquiry and good listening, and they must also have a sense of the non-verbal language of the brain-dead's family that may be a major reason for their approval to donate the organs of the brain dead, and taking into consideration that organ donation awareness as one of the critical issues in transplantation centers.

Keywords: Organ donation, Challenges, Cultural influences, Personal influences.

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1. Introduction

Organ donation is a multifaceted and delicate subject that intertwines personal convictions and cultural viewpoints. A multitude of factors, encompassing religious, ethical, and cultural considerations, can shape people's stance on organ donation (Sharp & Tollefsen, 2019, pp. 1-13), (Goyal, 2012, pp. 282-285)

Religious beliefs on organ donation diverge widely. Some religions advocate it as an altruistic act of benevolence, while others might express reservations or impose restrictions. Therefore, seeking advice from religious leaders or scholars is crucial. When looking at ethical apprehensions about organ donation, such as concerns about the determination of death, consent, or the possibility of exploitation, they may be present in some individuals. These concerns necessitate transparent communication and education (Choudhury et al., 2020).

Some people highly regard personal autonomy and the right to make decisions about their bodies. Others might stress the necessity of obtaining informed consent prior to any organ donation procedures (Dalal, 2015, pp. 44-51).

Cultural beliefs about death and life after death can shape views on organ donation. In certain cultures, the body is deemed sacred and should remain undisturbed after death, while others might perceive organ donation as a means to continue contributing and assisting others posthumously (Li MT et al., 2019, pp. 1001-1018)

The attitudes of a person's community or cultural group can significantly influence their views. The social norms and expectations within a specific community can mold an individual's perspective on organ donation. Cultural customs and practices related to death and burial can affect the readiness to donate organs. It is vital to understand and respect these traditions when discussing organ donation within particular cultural contexts (Cotrau et al., 2019, pp. 12-14).

Enhancing awareness about organ donation, debunking myths and misconceptions, and providing accurate information can assist individuals in making informed decisions (pennmedicine.org, 2019).

Acknowledging and respecting the diversity of beliefs is crucial. Health care professionals should approach discussions about organ donation with sensitivity and cultural competence (Attum et al., 2023).

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Promoting community engagement in discussions about organ donation, involving cultural leaders, and encouraging open dialogue can lead to a broader understanding and acceptance (Timar J et al., 2021, pp. 380-394).

Organ donation often involves individuals who are declared brain dead. Brain death is defined as the total and irreversible loss of all brain function, including the capacity for the brainstem to regulate respiratory and vegetative activities (Roopan, 2023).

The diagnosis of brain death is made by one or more physicians not associated with a transplantation team (donorrecovery.org, learn-understanding-brain-death) The process of confirming brain death involves a series of tests to determine whether any brain activity is present. These tests are carried out twice to minimize any chance of error. The tests used to determine brain death include checking for reactions to light, physical stimulation, and certain reflexes. The person is also disconnected from the ventilator for a short period of time to see if they make any attempt to breathe on their own. Brain death is diagnosed if a person fails to respond to all of these tests (nhs.uk, conditions-brain-death-diagnosis).

In the context of organ donation, brain death is the circumstance under which the donation of vital organs most commonly takes place. Once brain death is declared, it means the person has died, but other organs, such as the heart, kidneys, or liver, can still work for a short time if the breathing machine is left in place. This allows for the possibility of organ donation. However, the concept of brain death and organ donation is often misunderstood and can be particularly difficult to broach with different communities due to cultural and religious beliefs. In many societies, there are cultural expectations of family involvement in medical care, and an inability to declare brain death without consent from the family can complicate the process (Terunuma, 2021)

Cultural customs and practices related to death and burial can affect the readiness to donate organs. It is vital to understand and respect these traditions when discussing organ donation within particular cultural contexts. Therefore, health care professionals should approach discussions about organ donation with sensitivity and cultural competence. Promoting community engagement in discussions about organ donation, involving cultural leaders, and encouraging open dialogue can lead to a broader understanding and acceptance. It's also important to enhance awareness about organ donation, debunk myths and misconceptions, and provide accurate information to assist individuals in making informed decisions (AMA J Ethics, 2020).

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In Saudi Arabia, organ donation is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal beliefs, cultural norms, and religious teachings. Despite concerted efforts to increase organ donation, the gap between the need for organs for transplantation and the lack of donors has been increasing globally (Alobaidi, 2023).

In fact, when we talk about brain death, we must remember the meaning of illness and death, and therefore we must keep in mind that there are some matters that must be clarified to the family of the brain-dead person and prepare them to make the decision to donate or not, as follows: the extent of the family's knowledge of the nature and meaning of brain death, and the mechanism for implementing regulatory procedures to confirm Brain death, the presence of a person responsible for a brain-dead patient is important during the routine procedures to confirm brain death and to communicate with the medical team and make important decisions, knowing the personal or cultural beliefs held by the family regarding organ and tissue donation, whether the decision to donate will be made individually or will the decisions be made as a family. Therefore, through this study, we will focus on the culture of organ donation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, based on the variables of age, level of education, location, and attitudes toward organ donation as dependent variables.

2. Previous work

Organ donation in Saudi Arabia is influenced by both personal beliefs and cultural factors. A study conducted in the SA found that only 19.6% of participants were willing to register as organ donors. However, 44.3% of the participants agreed that they were healthy enough to donate organs. Positive associations were found between intention for organ donation and beliefs that organ donation is a good thing, can save someone's life, and can have a positive impact on life after death. The study also highlighted the importance of promoting awareness about organ donation, particularly in terms of religious permissibility, to increase donation rates (Alobaidi, 2023).

Doerry et al. explored the religious and cultural aspects of organ donation in order to reduce the gap through understanding different religious beliefs. They found that the religious beliefs of patients, potential donors, and healthcare professionals play an important role in the decision-making process (Doerry et al., 2022).

In China, a study examined the influence of traditional Chinese culture on organ donation within the frameworks of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Within each of these cultural systems, certain expressions or statements in modern Chinese society are often perceived as conflicting with

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organ donation, especially cadaveric organ donation. It's not that the fundamental tenets of these systems inherently oppose cadaveric donation, but rather, contemporary Chinese individuals have not developed and established relevant ritual practices that align with the central concerns of organ transplantation. The article concludes that to encourage more donations, there is a necessity to establish pertinent ritual practices that support organ donation in accordance with the central concerns of these cultural systems (Yu Cai, 2013).

Brisnahan et al. show that spiritual connection with the transplant recipient, spiritual concern about removing organs, and attitudes toward organ donation significantly predicted willingness to become an organ donor for participants in USA and China (Bresnahan et al., 2010, pp. 133-146).

In some cases, participants thought organ donation was a noble deed. They believe that importance of context, values and beliefs, lack of knowledge about donation influence of spiritual or cultural values, lack of communication, and the need to preserve an intact body in relation to death and dying (Molzahn et al., 2005, pp. 82-98).

In South Korea, traditional Confucian-based thought still prevails. Barriers to organ donation in South Korea, include Confucianism, misunderstandings and myths, organs as spare for selling, lack of clarity in the definition of death in the new legislation, and limited medical insurance coverage (Kim et al., 2004, pp. 147-154).

Similarly, Asian Americans hold more negative attitudes toward and participate less frequently in a large, urban organ-donation program (Alden and Cheung, 2000, pp. 293-314). In UK, culture and religion play a much less prohibitive part in determining the level of organ donation (Randhawa, 1998, pp. 1949-1954). While, in Asian countries, Living-related kidney donation is more social than cultural (Woo, 1992, pp. 421-427).

In relation to the topics addressed in prior research, there appears to be a gap in studies examining the proper execution of standard procedures for confirming brain death, which is vital for an accurate diagnosis. In addition, there is a need to investigate the role of the individual responsible for the patient declared brain-dead during these procedures due to its significance in liaising with the medical team and making crucial decisions. It's also necessary to determine if the norms or procedures reflecting the culture of handling brain-dead patients involve respect for the patient's dignity, open communication with the family, and adherence to ethical guidelines during the process of confirming brain death and discussing potential organ donation.

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The results can highlight the differences between regional cultures in the Kingdom due to the existence of multiple cultures across the regions, and their influence on organ donation, considering the beliefs, traditions, and practices associated with these subjects.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design and Participants

An online survey was conducted among the residents of KSA during 2023 using a questionnaire created in Google Forms. This cross-sectional study was designed by a panel of experts who suggested appropriate questions to explore the correlation between organ donation & personal and cultural beliefs in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was clearly stated at the beginning of the questionnaire, and participants were only allowed to proceed with the survey after they explicitly agreed to participate.

3.2. Instruments

The survey was divided into three sections. The initial section collected socio-demographic information such as the participants' age, education level, and location. The second section aimed to gauge the participants' general knowledge about organ donation. The final section delved into the participants' normative, behavioural, and control beliefs about organ donation by assessing their agreement with various statements.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

The Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the variables of the study.

4. Results

The Statistics of the variables are calculated based on respondent answers as displayed and summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Statistics of the variables based on respondent answers.

Variable		%
Age	18-30 year	32.2
	31-50 year	55.8
	51-65 year	10.9
	66 and more	1.1

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Location	Eastern Province	9.9
	Western Region	37.5
	Central Region	32.4
	Northern Region	5.2
	Southern Region	8.8
	Outside the Kingdom	6.2
Education	high school	34.6
	diploma	6.8
	high diploma	5.9
	university degree	44.6
	master degree	5.7
	PhD degree	2.4
Do you agree on Organ donation	No	61.5
	Yes	38.5
If the answer is yes, have you	No	76.2
informed your parents of this desire?	Yes	23.8
If the answer is no, state the reason	Fear of them not agreeing	21.8
	Other reasons	78.2
Have you ever seen an awareness	No	55.9
advertisement about organ failure and	Yes	44.1
organ donation?		
Do you have enough information	No	54.3
about organ failure and organ	Yes	45.7
donation?		
If the answer is no, state the reason	Weak visual media awareness.	26.4
	Negligence of the press and journalists and	10.1
	media, Saudi Center for Organ	
	Transplantation is negligent in this aspect,	
	and Organ transplantation centers have a	
	weak role in educating patients.	
	All of the above.	63.5

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Do you agree that some habits and	No	27.7
traditions may resist organ donation?	Yes	72.3
Do you believe the stories you hear	No	52.3
about organ donation?	Yes	47.7
If you were the decision maker to	I agree to donate his organs for the sake of	58.5
agree to donate the organs of a brain-	charity, kindness, and mercy.	
dead person close to you, what would	I do not agree due to family circumstances.	39.5
be your decision?	I agree to donate his organs because obeying	2
	God is from obeying the ruler (based on the	
	wise government's approval of organ	
	donation).	
If you were the decision maker to	No	30.9
donate the organs of a brain-dead	Yes	69.1
person, would you agree to transplant		
a kidney taken from a brain-dead		
person to a person close to him?		
Do you have information about the	No	62.2
types of organ donation approved by	Yes	37.8
the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?		
If you have information about brain	No	18.3
death, will you talk to your family	Yes	81.7
educate them about this topic?		

The majority of the study participants (61.5%) disagree to organ donation, and (76.2%) don't even attempt to discuss organ donation with their parents due to fear of them not agreeing (21.8%) and other reasons (78.2%). Most of participant (55.9%) have not seen an awareness advertisement or even have enough information (54.3%) about organ failure and organ donation, in addition to lack of awareness and information about types of organ donation approved by KSA (62.2%). Most of participants (72.3%) find that traditions may resist organ donation, although (52.3%) don't believe the stories they hear about organ donation.

There are (58.5%) who agree with organ donation of other people for the sake of charity, kindness, and mercy. Also (69.1%) agree to transplant a kidney taken from a brain-dead person to a person

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close to him. At the end (81.7%) agree on convey more information about organ donation to their family.

5. Discussion

The current research assessed the willingness to donate organs among the Saudi Arabian population, taking into account personal and cultural beliefs. It was discovered that these beliefs play a significant role in the decision-making process regarding organ donation in Saudi Arabia.

A similar conclusion was drawn from a recent study conducted in Qatar. The study, which surveyed 1044 adults in a household setting, investigated their beliefs and intentions towards organ donation (El-Menyar et al., 2020, pp. 122-127).

Another study that examined the intentions towards organ donation among Americans and Koreans underscored the substantial impact of personal and cultural beliefs on the decision-making process for organ donation. (Yun and Park, 2010, pp. 130-137)

The current study also found that most of the participants (55.8%) are within 31-50 years old. Around (44.6%) are university graduates, and (37.5%) live in Al-Gharbeia. Most of them (61.5) refuse to donate organs for reasons not related to parental disapproval. Most of them (55.9%) are even not interested in watching awareness advertisements about organ failure and organ donation, and consequently (54.3%) have no sufficient information about this. A total of (63.5%) of them attributed this to several reasons such as the lack of visual media awareness, negligence of the press, shortcomings of the Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation, and the weak role of organ transplantation centers in patient awareness. Significant portion (72.3%) believed that certain customs and traditions pose barriers to organ donation. And nearly (52.3%) don't believe the stories told about organ donation. It turns out that (62.2%) do not have information about the types of organ donation approved by the Kingdom. So components under personal and cultural beliefs showed a statistically significant positive correlation with a definite intention for organ donation which is consistent with previous study results.

The comprehensive findings suggest that the intention to donate organs among the Saudi population is significantly shaped by personal and cultural (Ajzen, 1991), (Yun and Park, 2010) (Alobaidi, 2023).

Worldwide, the establishment of policies for organ procurement for transplantation and systems promoting organ donation are rooted in the principle of selfless giving (Hafeeq et al., 2021, pp. 268-270), Organ donation represents the epitome of selfless behavior, where individuals driven by

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altruism establish a standard of volunteering for organ donation, thereby fostering a sense of communal unity (Dopelt et al., 2022), In our study, there are (58.5%) believed that they might support donating the organs of their brain-dead relatives as a form of charity, mercy, and benevolence. For example, (69.1%) confirmed that they find no objection to transplanting a kidney taken from a brain-dead person to their relatives. This induces statistically significant positive correlation between altruistic beliefs and definite intention for organ donation. A recent study from Qatar echoed these findings, with 95% of participants expressing agreement with the altruistic principles underlying organ donation (Yun and park, 2010, pp. 130-137).

The findings of this study suggest that the Saudi population generally exhibits altruism in relation to organ donation. Policies that create opportunities for individuals to express this altruism, such as registering for organ donation, could foster a sense of social unity. However, one of the significant challenges faced by organ donation initiatives in Middle Eastern countries is the stagnant growth rate of deceased organ donations compared to voluntary ones (Shaheen, 2016, pp. 1387-1389).

In light of the existing research and the results of this study, it's advisable to establish avenues that support organ donors and their families, as this could enhance organ donation. Recently, King Salman recognized the altruistic act of 200 Saudi citizens who registered in a government organ donation program by bestowing upon them the King Abdulaziz Medal of Third Class (Arab News). In addition, the Tawakkalna utility, in collaboration with the Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation (SCOT), has also venerated organ donors with 3 classes of medals—gold, silver, and bronze. This gesture of appreciation acknowledges their selfless contributions to patients combating organ failure. (Saudi Gazette, Tawakkalna Awards Medals to Organ Donors) .The government of KSA has verified its popularity of the significance of imparting help to donors via these recent improvements.

Since organ donation regularly involves folks that are declared mind useless, in this case, I observed that the health practitioner is liable for the case of brain demise and the organ transplant coordinator have to be fully aware about these topics, as well as they must have a spirit of inquiry and correct listening, and that they should even have a sense of the non-verbal language of the brain-lifeless's circle of relatives that may be a primary purpose for their approval to donate the organs of the brain dead.

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6. Conclusion

The research examined the relationship between personal and Cultural beliefs in Saudi Arabia toward organ donation. The control variables consisted of age, level of education, and location. Certainly, Weak role of media in spreading awareness. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind organ donation awareness as one of the critical problems in transplantation centers, In addition to that, the Continuation of Saudi Arabia's consciousness of organ donation Culture besides the activation of advantageous non secular and social impacts could improve organ donation nationwide. The dependent variables consisted of attitudes toward organ donation. Also, Most of the research participants were willing to Willingness to be Living Organ Donors. And they wanted to Support Organ Donation.

7. Recommendations:

- 1. Encouraging interest in organ donation organ donation within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular amongst people aged 31-50, and among university students.
- 2. Spreading visual media awareness about organ donation and types of organ donation approved in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 3. Holding courses for members of organ donation centers to educate patients.
- 4. Encouraging collaboration with social regulatory bodies to clarify problems related to organ donation, emphasizing humanistic, altruistic, and moral values.
- 5. Strengthening public self-belief within the healthcare device and organ transplant centers, fostering verbal exchange between medical groups and donor families in each instances.
- 6. Continuously encouraging donors and their households via moral standards, highlighting their contributions with pride, and reflecting the values of altruism and team spirit in society.
- 7. Crafting powerful and clear regulations that help and encourage organ donation, incorporating cultural and non-secular concerns.

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