The Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence

A Case Study from Lebanon

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Executive summary

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a major public-health and social problem which jeopardises women's development and abuses many of their basic human rights. Recent interventions to combat the problem have focused on including men – not as holders or perpetuators of privileges, but rather as potential and actual contributors to gender equality. These initiatives to include men in programmes to end VAW have achieved some success so far. Several studies in the Arab world have highlighted the importance of addressing VAW. However, of all gender-related issues it still receives the least recognition and acknowledgement from Arab states and policy makers. Instead, the struggle continues to be led by women's organisations fighting to remove all forms of discrimination against women.

Accordingly, a regional three-year programme (2009–2011), funded by Oxfam and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, entitled *Strategies and Approaches to Working with Men and Boys to End Violence against Women*, has been initiated. In Lebanon, it has been implemented by Oxfam GB in partnership with KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation Against Women and Children.

This document is a report on a pilot study on 'The Effects of Socialization on Gender and Violence', an activity component of the programme.

This research is a pioneer initiative in Lebanon, aimed at enhancing our understanding of the context that shapes men's gender roles and affects their behaviours, practices, and attitudes towards gender equality, with an explicit focus on VAW. The design of the study was based on the following research questions: whether culture plays a role in shaping men's gendered roles; how gender power and masculinity create authority over women, and therefore whether men would consent to yield authority to women; how men can be victims of violence themselves; how men feel about VAW; and how they see change happening.

The research took place in the Baalbek area. A cross-sectional survey and seven focus-group discussions were used for the research. Two-hundred and seventy-three men engaged in the survey and 73 participated in the focus groups. Their ages ranged between 18 and 75, and they represented different religious groups, levels of education, marital status, working conditions, and residential areas (urban and rural).

The findings indicated that a good deal of role-gendering occurred during childhood. In particular, male adolescents were expected by their parents to be strong as adults, to be like their fathers, and to control and protect women; parents reinforce this gendering by being proud of boys if they are tough, strong, brave, and more of a 'man', and by being proud of girls if they are helpful in performing household chores, obedient, and beautiful. Boys were given priority and entitlement over their female siblings by being their providers and being made responsible for their security and honour.

The research findings also revealed that as an adult the typical man perceives his role to be the provider for the family, a decision maker, an authoritarian, a protector who is powerful and strong, and who punishes his family members when they make mistakes. Men are found to be pressured by their society to

fulfil that role, and as a result they consider themselves to be victims. At the same time, however, most of them enjoy the power that this role provides.

Furthermore, the findings show that men consider the woman's role in terms of being dedicated and devoted to her family: a role which, if fulfilled, will grant her the trust of her family and husband. Paid employment for women is perceived to jeopardise this role, threaten male supremacy, and challenge the control exercised by men. Men considered respect, obedience, and marital obligation as non-negotiable rights. Some men questioned their future role in the event of women becoming providers.

Many of the male respondents were raised in a violent environment and were commonly using violence as a way to express anger and resolve disputes. Most justifications given for the use of VAW related to women's 'bad' behaviour, with no acknowledgement of men's responsibility for the violence. Interestingly, many men, mostly married, felt proud and relieved after a violent outburst, perceiving themselves as having done the right thing.

In conclusion, the study indicated that gender roles are social constructs that are propagated by parents during childhood. However, both sexes suffer from its consequences. With women assuming more productive and income-generating roles, many men feel their supremacy to be threatened. Many even wondered about the role that they will be expected to play in the future. As a result, violence is likely to be perceived as a defence used by men to protect their vanishing role. A way to combat VAW would therefore be to break the gender-role stereotypes and encourage individuals to assume the social roles that they themselves choose, regardless of their gender.

The study makes a number of recommendations for action, such as (among others) a call for a change in attitude on the part of communities; the establishment of centres to provide counselling services for victims; empowering women economically; and targeting governments and religious leaders to secure political will and commitment to end gender inequalities and gender-based violence. This study also provides an opportunity for Oxfam GB, KAFA, and other interested women's organisations to use the recommendations for their on-going work with men and boys to end VAW in the area.

1. Introduction

The Middle East region, despite its reputation for great wealth derived from oil revenues, is deeply divided by politics and torn by conflict. These conflicts, operating along sectarian divisions, continuously compromise the rights of women and expose their vulnerabilities. Moreover, in the male-dominant and patriarchal society of the region, culture, traditions, and misinterpretation of religion tend to offer justifications for the prevailing gender inequalities that deny women their rights in the private and public spheres.

Violence against women (VAW) is widespread in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Somach and AbouZeid, 2009; El Sanousi and Anani, 2010). It is exercised in the household, in the community, and in public institutions. A UNIFEM study of VAW in Syria in 2005 indicated that in 56 per cent of the cases studied women were mistreated and cursed by male heads of households to punish them for 'mistakes' that they had committed (UNIFEM, 2005). In Egypt, women are often beaten, raped, or abused for refusing to have sex with their husbands; 22 per cent of the women in the study had suffered injuries from domestic violence that necessitated hospitalisation (Benninger-Budel cited in Sottas, 2001). In Lebanon, according to a UNFPA-supported study conducted in 2002, out of 1,415 women interviewed, 35 per cent were victims of domestic violence (Usta et al., 2007: 208–19). In Jordan, there is a serious problem of domestic violence and honour killing (Amanjordan, 2009). In Yemen, in 2007, the Ministry of Interior reported that as many as 130 Yemeni women were killed in 2,694 incidences of violence and sexual assault (Arrabyee, 2008). Of all gender-related issues, VAW still receives the least recognition and acknowledgement by Arab states and policy makers.

Oxfam GB commissioned the pilot study discussed in this report in order to understand further the context that shapes men's gender roles and affects their behaviours, practices, and attitudes towards gender equality, with an explicit focus on VAW. The design of the study was based on the following research questions: whether culture plays a role in shaping men's gendered roles; how gender power and masculinity create authority over women, and therefore whether men would consent to yield authority to women; how men can be victims of violence themselves; how men feel about VAW, and how they see change happening.

The pilot study was undertaken with the hope that Oxfam GB, with its partner KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation Against Women and Children and other interested women's organisations, would be able to use the findings and recommendations of this study to re-shape and re-create new dimensions of programmatic interventions to address VAW. It will also help these organisations to promote the inclusion of innovative ways of working with men and boys in different parts of the region.

2. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study builds on Social Learning Theory and Power-control Theory as factors that can explain why men commit VAW. The Social Learning Theory is a behaviourist approach which seeks to explain gender socialisation, the behaviour of men and women, how they learn from one another, and how the social environment makes people act in certain ways (Bandura cited in Sommer, 1979). And the Power-control Theory holds that the violent-party consciously uses the technique of violence to exercise and maintain control and power over another person (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004).

3. Socialisation and violence

A number of scholars single out socialisation and culture as the most important factors explaining men's VAW (El Sanousi, 2004; Bruce et al. in Berkowitz, 2002). The Social Learning Theory studies gender socialisation and asserts that people learn through observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura cited in Sommer, 1979). Socialisation is understood as 'the process of social interaction by which people acquire those behaviours essential for effective participation in society. The individual and society are mutually dependent on socialisation essential for the renewal of culture and the perpetuation of society' (Hughes et al., 2002). Hence, 'many of our choices are habitual and so not subject to deliberate and open choice' (Bauman and May, 2001:17). In other words, an individual's acquisition of habits, whether positive or negative, is due to their exposure to models that display certain traits when solving problems and coping with the world.

This school of thought maintains that violence is a result of the socialisation process whereby cultural and societal expectations of men influence how boys are brought up to think and act in relation to women. The environment in which men are socialised is significant. The ideas, images, and norms of behaviour to which men are exposed play an important role in shaping their behaviour. This is mainly due to 'agents of socialisation', as well as to the existing system and context that play significant roles in nurturing and endorsing male VAW.

In terms of 'agents of socialisation', Bell maintains that the initial agents are the parents and the family, who can affect the formation of ethical behaviours; later in life, peers and schools become important agents of socialisation (Bell, 2008). In this context, some scholars believe that there is an association between violence in a person's family or community of origin and later spousal victimisation (Macmillan and Kruttschnitt, 2005). In other words, a male who has been assaulted by or witnessed assaults within his family during childhood or adolescence is likely to become abusive in his relationships. Perpetrators learn violence through observation and exposure to social values and beliefs about gender roles. Boys who witness their fathers beating their mothers are more likely to batter their own spouses. Furthermore, violent behaviour is enhanced when agents of socialisation fail to prevent or punish batterers for using violence.

The mass media, especially television, also serve as agents of socialisation. In most cases, individuals acquire attitudes, emotional responses, and new styles of conduct through models presented to them by films and television (Bandura cited in Sommer, 1979). In the MENA region, violence on TV is negatively-affecting boys (Anderson et al., 2003). Television programmes, action movies, and violent video games which continually glorify masculinity by glamorising the character of the 'stud' or 'macho' male continue to attract young boys as their primary audience.

Patriarchal systems, power, and violence

As for the relationship between the existing system and violence, in many parts of the MENA region patriarchal systems and tribal culture continue to prevail. Niaz posits that violence is predominantly perpetrated in patriarchal family systems and tribal cultures (Niaz, 2003). In these systems, patriarchal ideology helps explain beliefs about VAW such as wife-beating. In many instances, a woman is perceived as the property of men (Bunch, 2005). This perception prevails among different classes, rich and poor, where daughters are forced into marriages of convenience or battered for the greater good of the family. More importantly, the patriarchal systems give power to men. Men enjoy benefits from patriarchal systems (Ruxton, 2004) that reinforce their sense of masculinity. Men are expected to dominate, to control, and to be the authority figures and decision-makers within their families and environment. As Ruxton posits, 'Men believe that privilege and

power are natural, normal and just … the unchecked power results in men having the freedom to do whatever they want' (Ruxton, 2004). In other words, men gain power by virtue of being male; they are ascribed power over others because of their sex and the group to which they belong (for example, family, tribe, or clan) (Araji, 2000). In such a context, where men enjoy these 'luxuries', it becomes impossible for men to give up their 'benefits'. This explains why men in Yemen, for example, base their arguments on Islamic codes and resist the concepts of 'gender' and 'equality', which they consider to be Western concepts (Ruxton, 2004).

Another school of thought stresses the role of power-control as the cause of gender-based violence. Feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is rooted in gender and power, and that it represents men's active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Anderson, 1997). Men are seen to use violence as an instrument to perpetuate dominance over women in order to subordinate them.

Some feminist scholars refer to male-perpetrator/female-victim violence as gender-based violence because they believe that it evolves from females' subordinate social status and the beliefs, norms, and social institutions that support a patriarchal structure (Barnett et al. cited in Araji, 2000). This perception stems from the belief that a large number of women are oppressed and treated as second-class citizens. In the MENA region there have been attempts to blame Islam for women's oppression. Although the interpretation of religion in this region makes the issue difficult to address, it should be noted that oppression of women is not restricted to the MENA region. Moreover, subordination or oppression in the MENA region is more likely to be reinforced by patriarchal systems and culture.

In many instances, gender-based violence is sustained as a result of a culture of silence (Van Beelen and Osakue, 2006). In such a context, it becomes even more difficult to identify women who have experienced violence or to determine the full extent of violence committed against women. It is within this context that some scholars found abusive behaviour and violence to be a deliberate choice made by the abuser in order to control their victim, rather than a result of the abuser's loss of control over their behaviour (Bunch, 2005; Smith and Segal, 2010). The abuser chooses violence to 'gain and maintain an imbalance of power and control within the relationship' (Bailey, 2006). In other words, violence is the result of a deliberate choice to exert power and control over women.

All of the above explanations are major contributors to gender-based violence, perpetuated consciously or unconsciously by men: consciously when deliberately choosing violence to maintain control and power, and unconsciously when violence and the subordination of women are a societal norm. Furthermore, the societal mistreatment of women is reflected in the culture – particularly the patriarchal culture – that marginalises women and lessens their value, while glorifying the role of men and contributing to the social acceptance of men as dominant. Gender-based violence is seen as a product of the socialisation process embedded in the existing culture and traditions in the MENA region.

Fieldwork and site selection

The fieldwork was carried out in Baalbek, Lebanon. Baalbek was selected for the following reasons: it is considered one of the largest provinces in Lebanon and among those with the poorest populations (El Laithy, Abu-Ismail, and Hamdan, 2008). According to a Papfam survey carried out in Baalbek in 2004, only 59.4 per cent of men surveyed were in work (Papfam, 2004). The lower poverty line for Baalbek is approximately $332 per month for an average household with 5.9 members (UNDP/CPSPS, 1998). In fact the average size of a poor family in Baalbek is much higher than that for Lebanon as a whole (4.7 members) (UNDP/CPSPS, 1998). Moreover, Baalbek was found to suffer from high levels of illiteracy, with about 13.6 per cent of

those over 10 years old classified as totally illiterate (UNDP/CPSPS, 1998). Gender inequality in Baalbek is pronounced, as exemplified by levels of female access to education and rates of illiteracy in poor families, as well as in the level of income earned. There are disproportionate rates of illiteracy among females in poor families (24 per cent of all females in poor families are illiterate) (UNDP/CPSPS, 1998). The vast majority (79 per cent) of female workers from poor families earn less than LBP 300,000 ($200) per month, compared with 37 per cent of males with the same income. This is mainly due to the concentration of females in low-skilled, low-status jobs, as well as wage discrimination (UNDP/CPSPS, 1998).

The clan system still prevails in many parts of Baalbek and serves as a bond between family members. Many families have strong clan ties and traditions, with intense loyalty to their own clans. Fathers are important within the clan system and tend to have major influences on their own family members in matters such as marriage choice. Cases of honour killing for allegedly staining the family's reputation – of which females are the primary targets and victims – are fairly common (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2002). Moreover, fathers are likely to influence the socialisation of their own children from birth by educating them to play traditional roles, thus assuring social cohesion and identity to the clan.

Baalbek is a diverse society, consisting of a variety of religious groups; their different points of view enhanced our knowledge and provide an in-depth understanding of the context of the study.

Field methods

The research explored male perceptions and opinions about gender-based violence. Thus, the sample studied was composed exclusively of men. Since this study was a pilot phase, the sample size was not determined on the basis of a percentage of the population; rather it considered the scope of the pilot study and the budget allocated for it. Researchers divided Baalbek into three roughly geographical areas to include urban, semi-urban, and rural neighbourhoods. This geographical division ensured the representation of male respondents from different locations which mirror the social mosaic of the community.

The methodology included a cross-sectional survey and seven focus-group discussions. A range of sampling methods (convenience, referral, and snowballing: explained below) were used in order to ensure the representation of different age groups, educational levels, occupations, and religious affiliations.

Cross-sectional survey

The cross-sectional survey included 273 men. Their characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (Total N= 273)*

Demographic characteristic	Level	N	(per cent)
Age	Less than or equal to 40 years	120	(43.9)
	41–75	153	(66.1)
Religion	Muslim	202	(74.5)
	Christian	49	(18.1)
	No answer	20	(7.4)
Educational level	Elementary or less	50	(20.2)
	Secondary	104	(42.1)
	University	93	(37.7)
Work	Professionals	61	(24.6)
	Office workers	37	(14.9)
	Labourers	150	(60.5)
Place of residence	Urban	166	(64.3)
	Rural	92	(33.7)
Dwelling type	Independent	187	(69.8)
	Other	81	(30.2)
Father's educational level	Illiterate	88	(33.0)
	Elementary	138	(51.7)
	Secondary and above	267	(15.4)
Mother's educational level	Illiterate	140	(51.9)
	Elementary	37	(37.4)
	Secondary and above	29	(10.7)
Marital status	Single	89	(32.7)
	Ever-married	183	(67.3)
	With male children	153	(85.9)
	With female children	155	(87.6)

N = number of respondents

The questionnaire used in the survey was divided into six sections focusing on the following questions:

Section (1): Questions in this section focused on the socialisation of men since childhood; the roles assigned to men since childhood; relationships with mothers, fathers, and sisters; and the expectations of the community.

Section (2): Questions in this section were aimed at generating information on gender roles; men's responsibilities compared with women's responsibilities; household decision-making; and the reactions of men in demonstrating power in the household.

Section (3): Questions in this section focused on generating data related to men's exposure since childhood to violence; the types of violence to which they were exposed; community expectations of men's gender roles; men's feelings about violence; and motives/reasons behind men's VAW.

Section (4): Questions in this section focused on issues related to gender relationships and changes over time.

Section (5): Questions in this section focused on gender-power relations; areas where men can negotiate equality; areas where men do not tolerate efforts to change them; and men's perceptions of ways of ending VAW.

Section (6): The last section provides demographic data about the respondents, including age, social status, ethnic group, number of children, profession, level of education, number of siblings, and place of residency.

Focus-group discussions

The focus-group discussions were conducted to validate the findings obtained from the cross-sectional survey and to collect more in-depth views on the following issues: (a) masculinity and gender roles as perceived by men; (b) reinforcing factors and costs incurred by assuming the assigned gender role; (c) whether these views and attitudes vary by age (in an attempt to identify the presence of trends over time); and (d) men's perceptions of VAW and opinions about what could be done to address them.

Seven focus groups were conducted with 73 men, ranged in age from 18 to 75 years. Participants represented different religious groups, levels of education, marital status, working conditions, and residential areas (urban and rural). Five focus groups included the wide range of age whereas one focus group was conducted with men aged 18 to 21 and another for men aged 41 to 75, to check whether there were differences in opinion by age.

Data analysis was based on a framework constructed by the themes of the research questions as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Framework for analysing the data

Theme	Definition
Socialisation	Understanding how boys are being raised: what is the role they are expected to fulfil in adulthood, and whether violence is part of their socialisation process?
Masculinity (gains and losses)	The ultimate impact of socialisation on shaping men's expected roles, women's expected roles, the gains and losses related to these roles.
Power and authority	Concepts of power and entitlement; areas in which men can negotiate power over women, and issues that they refuse to negotiate.
Ending violence against women	Men's reactions to and opinions about violence against women, and their suggestions of ways to end it.

Findings

The findings indicate that society and parents give boys entitlement over their sisters from early childhood. Boys are raised in a way that provides them with a feeling of authority over women and makes them expect women to accept their superiority. They will react violently when they feel that their authority is being threatened, mainly because they are brought up in a violent environment and have learned to deal with frustrations in a violent manner. At the same time, findings show that men may perceive their role to be a burden and would consider themselves to be victims of the stereotyped role dictated by society.

The socialisation of boys

The findings indicated that the shaping of boys' attitudes and a good deal of role-gendering starts to occur relatively early in the child's life: 78 per cent of men interviewed were expected during their adolescence to be as strong as adults, to be like their father (56 per cent), and to earn money (89 per cent). They were allowed more freedom of mobility, such as being allowed to play outside (45 per cent), or do the shopping for the family (55 per cent), as compared with their sisters (22 and 32 per cent respectively); the restriction on their sisters' movements limited their interaction with the outside world.

In addition, when looking at the characteristics of the child that would make his parents proud of him, the more frequently cited reasons for parental pride were gender-specific characteristics: parents would be proud of the boy if he were tough and strong, brave, more of a 'man', his 'father's son', and also because he carries the family name. On the other hand, parents were reported to be proud of their daughters if they are helpful with household chores, were obedient, and beautiful. It is noteworthy to mention that there are respondents who reported that they could not find characteristics in their sisters that would make their parents proud; this response is likely to reflect a superior perspective of their own gender.

Findings also indicate that most men were raised since childhood to assume a domineering role over women: it was more common for the sister(s) be asked to serve her

brother(s) (51 per cent) than the other way around (32 per cent); almost 70 per cent of the men interviewed reported that their parents expected them to be able to control women as adults; and around 85 per cent of the participants were responsible as adolescents for taking care of their sisters, mainly by watching their behaviour and protecting them from other men. Although many considered this protective role to be assigned by religion, the majority recognised that their fathers and mothers, almost equally, were requesting they fulfil that role.

Taking a closer look at parental roles in child rearing, we see that most men reported that their female care-giver (mother/sister) was more involved than their male counterpart in household chores like preparing food (exclusively found to be a woman's role in this study), teaching children, and caring for them when sick. Female care-givers orchestrated gender relationships in ways such as asking the boys to take care of their brothers and sisters, requesting the sister to serve her brother, and advising him to be cautious with women. Interestingly, the female care-giver was also frequently reported to care less for the respondent than for his sister; this may reflect a preferential preoccupation of the mother in raising the girls to become adult women, but this finding needs to be elucidated in further research. On the other hand, the male care-giver (father/brother) was frequently reported to be involved in disciplining or punishing the child and in reinforcing behaviours socially labelled as male-related, such as instructing the boy to be tough, telling him to hit back when hit, teaching the male child to drive a car, and allowing him to go to parties. The male care-giver frequently showed favouritism to boys by prioritising the education of the son over the daughter, particularly at times of economic hardship.

These findings reflect the role of care-givers in reinforcing the gender role: the female care-giver in teaching the boy how to interact with girls, whereas the male care-giver in showing him how to become a man: tough, domineering, occasionally violent, and a breadwinner.

Furthermore, most men interviewed characterised their relationship with their mother in terms of love and trust, and their relationship with their father as one of fear. This is understandable, as mothers are reported to be easy-going, compassionate, and permissive, but are also reported to more commonly engage in verbal abuse such as screaming as a way of correcting 'bad' behaviour. Fathers, on the other hand, are reported to be harsh, frequently blaming their sons for mistakes; prone to using physical abuse, denying allowances (economic abuse), and kicking boys out of the house (psychological abuse) as ways of punishing or correcting 'bad' behaviour.

Since many men reported being raised to model themselves on their fathers, it is therefore expected to find these behaviours transmitted down through generations.

In addition, many men reported being raised in a violent environment: having witnessed violence during their childhood, either through watching violent movies (24 per cent), watching people fighting in the streets (45 per cent), or at home (34 per cent). The school is also reported to be a place where violence occurred frequently: more than two-thirds of men reported that hitting with a hand or a stick, screaming or shouting, and being thrown out of class were common practices used by their teachers, regardless of their sex, to discipline students. Being raised in a violent environment is often a predisposing factor for future violent behaviour.

In brief, the research reveals that many boys in Baalbek are exposed to a gendered upbringing which gives them priority and entitlement over their female siblings. Many are also raised in a violent environment where they are subject to abuse by their parents and teachers in the name of discipline and have witnessed violence in their surroundings.

It should be noted, however, that these findings are not common across the various socio-economic variables studied. The gendered upbringing was less observed among younger men, those who were better educated, and those living in urban areas. This is likely to

reflect a trend in the decline of traditional roles taking place over time within the conservative Baalbek area, as levels of education increase and other societal changes take place. However, when related to violence witnessed in the environment or at school, such differences were not observed: regardless of the men's age, religion, education, or marital status, the violence observed was reported with similar frequency. However, education seems to affect parents' use of physical violence as a disciplinary measure, particularly since illiteracy was associated with increased use of hitting by hand or a stick.

In light of the above findings, it is evident that boys' upbringing would affect the development of the adult man and his position regarding gender roles and gender-based violence. Accordingly, the perceptions, attitudes, and practices (when possible) of the male participants in the study with respect to their view of masculinity, power, and authority was analysed.

Masculinity

Men's views of masculinity were reflected through their perceptions of the ideal man and the ideal woman, how they were shaped, and the gains and losses related to these roles.

Perceptions of and attitudes towards men's role

When describing the ideal man, the characteristics commonly cited by the participants in the focus-group discussions included the following: being a good provider for his family, who 'works and strives for his home'; a decision maker; an authoritarian, and a protector who is powerful and strong, and one who punishes his family members when they make mistakes.

Many of these characteristics are reminiscent of the male care-giver who was involved in the child's upbringing. However, a number of illustrative examples of characters in TV series were provided to describe the ideal man, which reflect the important role that mass media plays in modelling behaviours. Moreover, it is observed that none of the attributes ascribed to the ideal man related to emotions or affection, which reflects a prevailing notion that men are tough and are supposed to suppress emotions that are considered as a sign of weakness.

The social pressure to abide by these characteristics is significant: most participants in focus-group discussions agreed that a man lacking these characteristics will be treated as incapable and cowardly, and will be marginalised. This is illustrated in the answer 'Why would he be living among men?' However, a few alluded to social changes which mean that the image of the powerful man and the man as the provider is fading away, due to economic hardship. This was evident in the answer: 'The man is barely able to meet the expenses of his family'.

The major gain that is derived from fitting into the mould of the ideal man is the respect and support of society ('People will be afraid to attack him'), which further favours the image of the powerful man and raises the possibility that for some men respect is equated with being strong and powerful.

Only one man highlighted the negative consequences of this role and worried about 'fighting with others'. A few other respondents raised concerns about comfort and time demands, whereas most men could not think of any negative consequences. The men appear to be actually enjoying their power and are either do not perceive its negative consequences or do not acknowledge them as part of being a 'man'.

However, when asked for their response to the suggestion that 'man is a victim', very few disagreed with the statement. Many mentioned the social norms and rules that put pressure on men, forcing them to be a provider, one who 'sacrifices his health and money for his kids and wife', and 'secures all the household demands regardless of circumstances' (younger brother for older sisters, changing economic situation, marriage

demands, etc), and 'bears the consequences of the behaviours of his family members', such as avenging insults to the honour of the family.

Perceptions of and attitudes towards women's role

The survey findings reveal that more than half of the men interviewed found it normal while growing up for sisters to serve brothers, for parents to have more affection for boys than girls, for boys to shop and play outside but not girls, and for parents to trust males more than females and to prioritise male over female education. It was therefore expected that the respondents, when asked about perceptions of the ideal woman, would most frequently mention attributes, such as 'being a good housewife and mother', 'sacrificing', 'devoted to her family', 'obedient', one who 'maintains the reputation and dignity of her husband'. Attributes relating to a woman's personality or education were seldom cited; they were mostly mentioned within the youth focus group. This may reflect the men's general preference for a woman who attends to their needs and who is a follower: a penchant that could change with time.

Similarly, the superior attitudes of men towards women, and the effects of social pressure, were discernable when the costs and gains of fulfilling this ideal role and the consequences of not fulfilling it were explored. Men in the focus-group discussions recognised that a woman will bear the costs for being 'dedicated and devoted to her family', 'yet at the expense of her health'; however, she is likely to gain 'her husband's satisfaction' and 'the trust of her community'. As for the consequences of lacking these characteristics, men acknowledged that the woman would be 'disrespected'; would be considered 'naïve and stupid'; will raise concerns about her potential misconduct and is likely to 'cheat when her husband is away'. Some participants also considered themselves to be responsible in the eyes of society. This is evident in responses such as 'her husband and family will be cursed' and 'people will say if he is not like her, he wouldn't be having her'. Interestingly, these perceptions were similar across religion, education, places of residence, and age ranges. This reflects the prevalence of an almost unanimous view of a woman as someone whose role and existence are supposed to centre around 'serving' and prioritising the man and the family, and whose actions are considered the man's responsibility.

With respect to their attitudes toward women's work, almost half of the men interviewed in the survey believed that women should not work if there is no financial reason to do so, while more than half agreed with the statement that the financial support of the family is the man's responsibility. Men in general, and in particular married men, agreed that women should take care of children and refrain from working, because they perceive work to affect motherhood negatively. As some focus-group discussion participants declared, 'she will be back from work tired and unable to give affection and tenderness to her children', and she is likely to 'rely on house helpers' to raise the children. Additional concerns regarding women's work were raised in the focus-group discussions. These concerns relate to potential misconduct or harassment in the workplace, so that the 'husband will be pushed into trouble' as the wife 'cannot protect herself'. Others worried about their authority and considered the ideal woman as the one who 'remains under the man's authority even if she is working' and 'stays under the man's will regardless of the high-ranking positions she achieves'.

A more liberal attitude towards education was observed; most men were in favour of women getting a university education and objected to the statement that a woman should seek marriage and not education. However, they also rejected the idea that a woman should be better educated than the man, possibly worrying about a threat to their superiority.

In terms of other gender norms, it was less common to find men with pro-feminist attitudes: fewer than half of the surveyed men agreed that society or personal laws discriminate against women, and almost two thirds agreed that women still require male

protection. Interestingly, more married men than single men agreed that the woman should stay loyal to her man even if he mistreated her. Yet close to half the sample agreed that males should assist their wives in household activities, and almost two-thirds agreed that women are men's partners, not followers. The egalitarian attitudes were observed more commonly among university-educated men.

Finally, when asked about their opinions regarding the changing role of women in the society, some men in the focus-group discussions considered educational attainment and work as positive changes affecting women and ultimately affecting society. However, they worried about losing control and authority. These fears were expressed in responses such as 'woman may break free from man', may 'disobey her family', and 'consider herself free to decide for herself'. They also expressed a need to put limits to the woman's freedom for fear of misconduct. There was a concern that might be legitimate about the role of men with respect to the changes happening to the role of women. This is evident in the answer: 'it will be limited to procreation, yet with medical advances this should be easy'.

Power: concept, entitlement, and relation to violence against women

For most male respondents, power meant imposing opinions and dominating, influencing, or taking decisions. Perpetrators use violence as a means of establishing power and authority over women and maintaining structural inequalities. In this sense, participants in the focus-group discussions perceived power/authority to be based on possession or ownership. In terms of power/authority between couples, participants related it to the roles within the household; women were said to have power within the house, whereas men were said to have power outside it. It is interesting to note that many men perceive that a woman's strength comes from raising her children and her ability to control them.

However, closer scrutiny of the participants' comments reveals that the power of the woman seems to be mostly restricted by 'the supreme power of the man'. Such comments – regardless of age, religion, education, or place of residence – emphasised the man as the master of the household. This is evident in responses such as: 'even when men agree to have their women in power and to express their opinion' this was conditioned by 'doing it in private so her behaviour is not interpreted as lack of respect'. There were even warnings about having women in power, with attendant risks of family break-up and violence.

The man's privileged wielding of power is considered to be a social inheritance given to him through his upbringing. Many even considered this privilege to be given to them by religion. However, most men argued that their right to power is based on their role as providers of the household, since 'money is power'. This may explain why men were opposed to the paid employment of women: their concerns related to loss of power and control. This is illustrated in the following responses: 'if the woman starts raising money, then there may be power shift'; 'if the man is not working, then his presence and role in the family is affected, but a non-working woman can get compensation through the affection she receives from being a mother'.

On the other hand, the findings of the survey reveal that most men admitted to using violence – whether physical or psychological – as a way to express anger and to resolve disputes. This finding was more prevalent among married men, men with lower levels of education, and men above the age of 40. As previously shown, having been raised in violent environments, men tend to imitate the violent acts they have witnessed. The relationship between upbringing and violence is further highlighted by the higher frequency of the use of violence among men above the age of 40 who reported having played with aggressive toys as children. In fact, many men in the focus-group discussions reported the following reasons why men use violence: imitating fathers; having been raised in a violent environment; being strong; wanting control; and peer pressure.

Solutions to violence against women and power negotiation

Looking closely at the men's responses, we note several obstacles to the fight against VAW. When analysing their reactions, it was interesting to observe a difference between the reaction to violence that was observed and violence that was perpetrated by the respondent: almost 70 per cent reported feeling sad and frustrated, and 80 per cent could not accept the violence they had witnessed. However, around 50 per cent perceived themselves to be doing the right thing when having a violent outburst, and 40 per cent described feeling good, relieved, proud, and strong. This may denote a low level of self-criticism among men, with a tendency to recognise harmful behaviour among others but not on their own part. Less well-educated men reported fewer feelings of guilt and regret following an episode of violence, possibly because they had fewer resources to deal non-violently with anger and frustrations, so they tended to copy behaviour observed around them. Married men, compared with single men, significantly perceived themselves to be doing the right thing and felt proud and strong. This can be interpreted as evidence that married men are expected to control their wives and punish their children; hence a violent outburst in the name of discipline or to assert control did not raise feelings of guilt.

Moreover, many male respondents blamed women for the necessity of violence, rather than assuming the responsibility themselves. In fact the number of statements blaming women as justification for men's abuse of them was higher (258) than the number of statements that faulted men (148). Reasons offered to justify abuse of women included delays in serving food; disobedience and disrespect; and an alleged liking for violence. These reflect the men's attempts to avoid assuming responsibility for their own acts. This fact needs to be considered and addressed in planning campaigns against VAW.

Most importantly, men rated respect and obedience as a top-priority, non-negotiable right; this accords with the concepts of the power and authority that they consider rightfully theirs, endowed to them by society and religion, which hold them responsible for women's behaviour and needs, and responsible for providing for the family. Accordingly, some men might oppose paid employment for women for fear of losing control over them, and for fear that women might take decisions by themselves; such eventualities would presumably affect their social identity and would sometimes lead them to assert their 'rights' by violent means. Yet several men consider themselves to be victims of a society that pushes them to fulfil that very specific role of provider and protector of women. Some of them were able to foresee inevitable changes occurring in women's role, as women become providers, and they wondered what their role would be as men with respect to this change. Since the men perceived that women acquire their power through their relation with their children, a solution to VAW may be envisioned by restructuring gender roles and encouraging men to become more involved in child care and as a way to regain some of the power they fear losing.

It was interesting to note that more than half of the men interviewed considered education at home to be an important solution to violence; and almost half of these male respondents favoured the idea of school education against violence. This reveals awareness of the important role that the family and school education play in modelling behaviour. Yet most men interviewed rated law-enforcement lowest on the list of possible solutions to end violence, although some participants in focus-group discussions noted that 'the absence of rules forbidding beating women would encourage men to beat their wives, making children violent too'. This discrepancy can be explained on the basis that although people believe in the importance of legislation to stop violence, they are sceptical about law enforcement in Lebanon. Accordingly, they would rely more on community awareness than on legislation to correct an abnormal situation.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research provided a wealth of information which may be summarised as follows: in accordance with Social Learning theory, boys are exposed to models (family or media) of male dominance and violence that they tend to imitate while growing up; men are also socialised to believe that they are superior to women and that they should dominate their partners and endorse traditional gender roles; there is a hierarchy of power wherein men view themselves as economically and socially superior to women; women's subordination and submission to men is considered to be normal, expected, accepted, and a man's right – non-negotiable, in the opinion of many.[1] Men, like women, suffer the toll of their gender role in silence and they have to endure the resulting social pressure. They feel that their contribution to the family and society is often unrecognised, that there is major social pressure to fit into stereotypical roles, and that society holds them responsible for the behaviour of their family.

The stereotypical gender roles are undergoing changes, mainly due – as revealed in this research – to improved education, changing economic factors, and the tendency of women to engage in paid employment. In this respect, men have concerns about losing power and authority. Changing social conditions mean that men will have to adopt new roles that are still unclear in their minds.

The study observed that for many men, concerns about women's freedom or paid employment are closely tied to concepts of family honour. Women are perceived as unable to protect themselves: a perception which is used to justify male dominance.

Though many of these findings require further research to provide a better understanding of the subject, the importance of this study lies in the new light that it sheds on gender-based violence, viewing men no longer as aggressors, but rather as products of a social construct that forces them to play a certain prescribed role.

There are key recommendations to be drawn from this study. The evidence that it provides suggests the need for the following initiatives to enact changes in attitude on the part of communities who maintain cultural patterns that encourage gender inequalities and VAW:

The family is the primary source of socialization; the family's conduct and values greatly influence the socialization of their children. These children grow up to act as similar parental figures to their parents. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness among families about the importance of raising children in a healthy, non-discriminatory, and violence-free environment.

Civil groups, mosques, churches, schools, and others are encouraged to take the lead in reaching out to these families through partnering with men to end gender discrimination and violence and to promote equal treatment of girls and boys.

Partnership can be in the form of creating a network of men and women dedicated to challenging existing stereotyped male socialization and to working on changing the patterns of socialization affecting gender discrimination and violence.

A strong network of devoted women and men is encouraged to launch campaigns and design projects to promote and inspire more men to get involved in this quest for a safer and more peaceful environment.

An efficient network is likely to influence politicians and religious leaders to become more committed to end gender inequalities and gender-based violence. In the MENA region in general and in Lebanon in specific, political and religious leaders tend to have a

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[1] For many men, respect is another non-negotiable right; it would be worth exploring the meaning of respect and what behaviours men classify as respectful or disrespectful.

fundamental role in inspiring and guiding their own communities. They could then have a significant role to play in encouraging their own communities to free themselves from discriminatory gender stereotyping and to embrace the concept of gender equality.

The study makes a number of recommendations for action, such as (among others) calls for a change in attitude on the part of communities; establishing centres and providing counselling services for the victims; empowering women economically; and targeting governments and religious leaders to secure political will and commitment to end gender inequalities and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, the study indicated that gender roles are social constructs that are propagated by parents during childhood. Both sexes suffer from its consequences. With women assuming more productive and income-generating roles, many men feel their supremacy to be threatened. Many even wondered about the role that they will be expected to play in the future. As a result, violence is likely to be perceived as a defence used by men to protect their vanishing role. A way to combat VAW would therefore be to break the gender-role stereotypes and encourage individuals to assume the social roles that they themselves choose, regardless of their gender.

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