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FYSE-112: Violence and Politics

18 December 2023

Islam & Violence Against Women

Systemic violence against women has been an inseparable part of societal and state structure for at least four to five thousand years.¹ It is difficult to pinpoint when and how this system came into place, but a well-accepted hypothesis is its development in conjunction with militarism and the conception of the “state”: following conflict between groups of men, institutions were necessary to subjugate the members of various outgroups (defeated men, any women, etc.) to prevent disruption to peace.² In the case of women, they obtained relief from further *uncontrolled* physical violence by accepting the “patriarchal bargain”: “supplying sex and housekeeping services to their male captors”.³ Variations of this theme are still present in the modern-day.

Abrahamic religions (Judaism, then Christianity, and finally Islam) were established millennia after the first proto-states, as were Greek and legal pretexts for gendered violence, yet many of the ideas central to these schools of thought were aligned with and extended the “patriarchal bargain” of established differential treatment. These systems operated upon several foundational tenets: men were anatomically superior to women and were less susceptible to external pressures.⁴ Nowhere is this better outlined than in the myth of Adam and Eve: the Hebrews delineated how Eve’s physical and mental shortcomings were representative of all women to follow. This model echoed that of the Greeks: stressing the importance of the silent woman stripped of agency.

¹ Fox, “Historical Perspectives on Violence Against Women.”

² Fox.

³ Fox.

⁴ Fox.

Today, while most Western and many Western-influenced countries (i.e. Japan, South Korea) have *de jure* equal rights between men and women, many Muslim-majority countries do not; if they do, such civil laws are often ignored by common social practice and overridden by Islamic *sharia* (a legal and punitive system, as well as an ethical code entirely built upon religious texts, with the *Holy Quran* as the centerpiece).

Sharia is generally seen as anathema through a Western, post-Enlightenment lens: in its purest form, it criminalizes women who deviate from a rigorous set of guidelines, while avoiding such limitations for men. The scope and authority of *sharia* vary from country to country, with some applying *sharia* upon only Muslims, or only in the realm of family law, while other countries deem it the “law of the land” and apply this legal framework in every aspect of peoples’ lives.⁵

Roadmap

This research paper began as an attempt to identify trends in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) rates across various Muslim countries over time and whether passage of legal reform resulted in meaningful change, before evolving into a careful study of religious texts and justifications, legal & extrajudicial procedures, while utilizing a sociological, economic, and epidemiological lens to examine the stifling of women’s autonomy in the Muslim world. Altogether, violence against women is examined starting from the theoretical textual level all the way down to the micro-level of individual behavior, with societal and cultural aspects in between the two endpoints.

Quantitative IPV Research

Intimate Partner Violence research is of two types: qualitative and quantitative. There have been extensive interviews of victims and observers, as well as raw numerical data of IPV incidence: sexual, physical, verbal, and emotional across various timeframes and

⁵ “Application of Sharia by Country.”

countries. However, the quantitative research quickly ran into roadblocks for the purpose of this paper: most countries lacked studies with a large enough sample size, or the surveys were one-off, with no way of gauging change over time. The data was wildly variable, and results were also at odds with intuitive reasoning. For example, Iraqi women displayed an 11 percentage point swing in rates of emotional/physical violence within a single year, while Saudi women displayed a 32 percentage point swing in rates of physical IPV over the course of two years.⁶

Similarly, 59% of a sample of 349 Lebanese women reported suffering from “physical IPV” ever in 2005, while “only” 27% of a sample of 689 Saudi women met the same parameter in an adjacent year.⁷ Saudi Arabia had some of the most draconian implementations of *sharia* at the time, hardly disincentivizing violence against women at all—logically, there appears to be severe underreporting.⁸

In the early 2010s, merely 11-12% of two enormous samples of 2000+ Saudi women reported experiencing IPV ever in their lifetimes, whereas the global average was roughly 30%.^{9 10} This was the time period prior to overhauls in women's rights in Saudi Arabia, so it is safe to assume that women participating in such surveys were not entirely truthful, perhaps due to fear.

Other sources of bias: what kind of women respond to such surveys? Safe guesses: women whose husbands tolerate such surveys, literate women—women who enjoy lower rates of IPV anyways. In addition, surveys at hospitals are some of the most common points of data collection. What kind of women have the privilege of accessing medical care? Rural and battered women would be underrepresented, despite them *actually* suffering IPV at higher

⁶ Elghossain et al., “Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in the Arab World.”

⁷ Elghossain et al.

⁸ Cardová, “Women’s Rights in Saudi Arabia | Ústav mezinárodních vztahů - Expertise to impact.”

⁹ Elghossain et al., “Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in the Arab World.”

¹⁰ Garcia-Moreno et al., “Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence.”

rates. Finally, distrust of surveys: the benefit of being truthful is largely outweighed by the risk of being discovered.

Religious Textual Examination

The two central textual authorities on the implementation of *sharia* regarding women are the *Quran* and collected *hadiths*, the former being the purest, definitive Islamic text, and the latter being secondary sources passed down over the centuries by Muslim scholars & figureheads.¹¹ *Hadiths* have played a critical part in developing *sharia*, and the interpretations appear more extreme and less vague than those delineated in the *Quran*. This is primarily what is used to justify violence/gender apartheid in many Muslim-majority countries.

Quran 4:34 is the only verse in the *Quran* delineating men's authority to inflict physical harm upon women:

“Men are the caretakers of women ... righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with. And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them first, if they persist, do not share their beds, but if they still persist, then discipline them gently”.¹²

The earliest *hadiths* studying this verse established a consensus: “to be light enough not to leave a mark, should be done with nothing bigger than a tooth stick, and should not be on the face.”¹³ Of course, such restraint on physical violence is hardly seen in practice; worryingly, such written precedent, even if supposedly encouraging moderation, has historically resulted in the tolerance of IPV.

Other *Quran* verses outline proper conduct for women:

- 2:228: “It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they truly believe in Allah and the Last Day”¹⁴

¹¹ Robinson, “Understanding Sharia.”

¹² “The Noble Quran.”

¹³ “The Noble Quran.”

¹⁴ “The Noble Quran.”

- 24:31: “Let them draw their veils over their chests, and not reveal their hidden adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their fathers-in-law ... Let them not stomp their feet, drawing attention to their hidden adornments”¹⁵

Verse 2:228 stipulates the total control of women's reproduction to their male guardians. Women must disclose their period cycles and pregnancy status, and then their husbands, at least in practice, inflict punishment should the woman's reproductive wishes vary from his. In Bangladeshi interviews, women reported being “beaten because they did not conform to their husbands' wishes about their pregnancy status or use of contraception”.¹⁶ Other testimonies: “My husband is a very ill-tempered man. He told me, ‘If you abort the baby, then I will not excuse you until the day of judgment’”.¹⁷ Because the *Quran* explicitly repeats the necessity for men to paternalistically control and guide women, the entrenched patriarchal structures are supported by the unquestionable authority of Allah.

Verse 24:31 is another example of asymmetrical responsibilities by sex: while both men and women are to remain faithful to their partners, only women must make themselves invisible to the other sex, via headscarves (ostensibly because hair tempts men). Again, the *Quran* perpetuates these dated gender roles: visible women are *bad women*. Such ideas have been echoed throughout history, especially by the Greeks (i.e. Pericles during the Peloponnesian War), but direct religious mandates allow for such ideas to persist *today* despite Western and liberal pressures. Thus, more economically autonomous nations such as Saudi Arabia have persisted with their anti-Western ideals for a longer period of time, as opposed to countries like Tunisia, where economic trade with the West has sometimes been contingent upon more progressive social change.¹⁸

Other religiously legitimate methods of oppressing women from various *hadiths*:

¹⁵ “The Noble Quran.”

¹⁶ Pearson et al., “Here, the Girl Has to Obey the Family's Decision.”

¹⁷ Pearson et al.

¹⁸ Glaze, “Historical Determinism and Women's Rights in Sharia Law.”

- “a woman should not travel except with a dhu-mahram” (male direct relative)¹⁹
- “any woman who asks divorce from her husband without a reason, the smell of paradise is prohibited for her”²⁰
- “do not prevent women (wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, etc) from (praying at) mosques. yet, their prayer at home is better (for them).”²¹

Societal Norms, Legal Stipulations, and Enforcement

According to the purest form of Islam, women are discouraged from leaving the house, even for religious reasons. If a woman’s male guardian graciously permits her to leave, she must be covered, not interacting with the world around her. This model of violence is entirely preemptive: systems accepted as legitimate prevent challenges to male authority in the first place. Lightly regulated “morality police” ensure that women abide by the strictest *sharia* policies and apply arbitrary and often extrajudicial punishment.²² This is encouraged in the *Quran*: the doctrine of *hisbah* mandates all Muslims to intervene when another Muslim is acting wrongfully.²³ Naturally, the enforcers are almost always men. The Saudi *muttawa*, for example, had an annual budget of \$390 million and roughly 4000 enforcing officers, with several thousand more administrative assistants in the early 2010s, beating, flogging, detaining, and interrogating suspects, usually women who were deemed too “Western.”²⁴ The least privileged men in the social hierarchy, convicts and ex-convicts, disproportionately flock to this occupation, where “the only job qualification was that they had memorized the Qur'an in order to reduce their sentences”.²⁵ The *mutawa* system ensures that any caliber of man can terrorize women.

Under Islamic law, husbands and wives have asymmetrical privileges. In theory, according to *Quran* 4:3, men can have up to four wives if they treat them justly.²⁶ Women are

¹⁹ “Forty Hadiths for Women.”

²⁰ “Forty Hadiths for Women.”

²¹ “Forty Hadiths for Women.”

²² “Saudi Arabia.”

²³ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*.

²⁴ Lief, “With Youth Pounding at Kingdom’s Gates, Saudi Arabia Begins Religious Police Reform.”

²⁵ Wright, *The Looming Tower*.

²⁶ “The Noble Quran.”

not afforded such privileges. In most Islamic societies, men can unilaterally call for a divorce, by uttering “*talaq*” thrice.²⁷ Immediately after, they may remarry. In contrast, a woman must offer financial compensation to her husband for the *possibility* of a divorce, through a system called *khul’*. Different schools of Islamic thought conflict regarding divorce: the Hanafi school does not permit women to initiate divorce even following abuse, while the Maliki law does.²⁸ Reform is incredibly difficult: because Islamic texts explicitly delineate *talaq* and *khul’*, reform means challenging the *Quran*, which is accepted as perfect and infallible. The perverse disincentives are very clear: on the whole, women in *sharia*-abiding countries suffer from low employment; thus, achieving the financial sum necessary for *khul’* is nearly impossible.²⁹ The monetary impediments are only a partial explanation: women seeking divorce “face judgment and blame for undermining family stability and unity.”³⁰ Religious, monetary, and familial pressures all prevent an escape from unhappy marriages for Muslim women.

Intuitively, all avenues for women to inflict repercussions (i.e. spur feelings of jealousy) on their husbands are closed: they are not allowed autonomy over their own reproductive system, they must accept polygamy, they cannot be unfaithful, and in many cases, they cannot obtain a divorce. The social and political systems under *sharia* effectively shield men from being held accountable, while legitimizing economic, emotional, and physical violence.

Rape Victims And Honor Killings Under Islam

But while the possibility of women obtaining divorce exists in the Muslim world, raped women have zero favorable outcomes in the aftermath—a multilayered system ensures

²⁷ “Muslim Sexual Ethics: Divorce.”

²⁸ “Muslim Sexual Ethics: Divorce.”

²⁹ Korotayev, Issaev, and Shishkina, “Female Labor Force Participation Rate, Islam, and Arab Culture in Cross-Cultural Perspective.”

³⁰ Nikparvar, Spencer, and Stith, “Risk Markers for Women’s Physical Intimate Partner Violence Victimization in Iran.”

so: first, honor killings, second, societal stigma, and third, an extremely lopsided legal system.

First, marital rape is not a concept accepted by much of the Islamic world. For example, Iranian Civil Law allows women to leave if she is, “at risk of losing her life, honor, and does not get the financial support of her husband”.³¹ Physical abuse at the hands of a partner generally does not achieve the threshold as a legitimate reason for escape. Battered wives have no legal protection.

Now to honor killings, a concept not limited to Muslim countries, for various religions and cultures have practiced this throughout history. What *is* unique to these Islamic cultures, however, is its persistence through modernity, the relative infrequency of punishment for the perpetrators, and the widespread tolerance of such practices. Seventy-two percent of a sample of 200 Jordanians claimed that family honor was restored following honor killings, and that Jordanian culture necessitates honor killings.³² Similarly, 45% of 116 Turkish male students justified honor killings for religious or social reasons.³³ In theory, both men and women can be honor killed, yet this is hardly seen in practice.³⁴ These heinous actions have been exported to the West—96% of honor killing perpetrators in Europe are Muslim.³⁵ In these cultures, honor killings are acceptable extrajudicial punishments against nonconforming women, which is not limited to the raped—refusal to wear a hijab, a desire to attend college or be financially independent, having non-Muslim acquaintances, or a desire to marry a specific man are common grounds for such violence.³⁶ The Egyptian Penal Code Article 237 explicitly suggests courts be lenient to men who honor-kill their wives

³¹ Nikparvar et al., “Theorizing the Process of Leaving a Violent Marriage and Getting a Divorce in Tehran.”

³² Ne’eman-Haviv, “Honor Killings in Muslim and Western Countries in Modern Times.”

³³ Ne’eman-Haviv.

³⁴ Sahgal and Townsend, “Four-in-Ten Pakistanis Say Honor Killing of Women Can Be at Least Sometimes Justified.”

³⁵ Chesler, “Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings.”

³⁶ Ne’eman-Haviv, “Honor Killings in Muslim and Western Countries in Modern Times.”

committing adultery, categorizing the crime as a misdemeanor, yet there is no provision for the reverse situation.³⁷ Men are allowed to be retributive and violent, while women are not.

Rape victims are often legally charged with adultery. This of course, is predicated upon the general societal idea that women are complicit in rape. For example, a *hadith* explains that women wearing perfume are likely to be adulterous, and such dubious reasoning can be extended to a wide range of behavior proving grounds for honor killing.³⁸ Honor is extremely important in collectivist Islamic society: “dishonored families may be excluded from community activities, subjected to mockery and gossip, and experience difficulty finding marriage partners for their children”.³⁹ If raped women are mercifully spared an honor killing, they will find it nearly impossible to find proper marriage, barring one abhorrent alternative. Both familial and legal pressures disincentivize taking a rape case to court—they are hushed up to prevent the fallout of dishonor.

If, for some reason, a case ever makes it to court, the raped woman will almost certainly be worse off after the verdict. According to the Quran, and in many Islamic countries like Libya, four witnesses are required to testify as the baseline for a rape conviction.⁴⁰ Besides the improbability of four individuals observing a rape and then being willing to testify, a woman’s testimony is generally considered to be half the value of a man’s (“If two men cannot be found, then one man and two women of your choice will witness—so if one of the women forgets the other may remind her”).⁴¹

If by some extremely improbable circumstance that four men to eight women testified that a rape occurred, Libyan judges have historically suggested that the rapist and rape

³⁷ “Egyptian Man Who Killed Sister for ‘Suspicious Behaviour’ Sentenced to Five Years’ Imprisonment | Egyptian Streets.”

³⁸ “Forty Hadiths for Women.”

³⁹ Ne’eman-Haviv, “Honor Killings in Muslim and Western Countries in Modern Times.”

⁴⁰ Badawy, “Towards a Contemporary View of Islamic Criminal Procedures.”

⁴¹ “The Noble Quran.”

victim marry as a “social remedy”.⁴² This is on top of the common adultery charge that the raped woman is convicted of, where two additional unfavorable consequences may occur: first, she may be sent to a “mental rehabilitation society”, or she may be stoned to death legally (if she is not honor killed extrajudicially).⁴³

Women’s and Men’s Resulting Behavior

As a result, battered women learn to “live with it”. During sex, women have described dissociating: “like a body without a spirit...I’m doing sex with him to avoid his anger”.⁴⁴ Eleven Gazan women surveyed by various local organizations describe their hopelessness: “stop thinking, and put a stone in your heart”.⁴⁵ A woman described the religious forces in play: “I could not reject his request for intercourse, because I know that it is taboo”. This is the most potent stage of violence, where the very act is normalized and avenues for escape do not exist.

In such societies, all men receive benefits from the systematic oppression of women to various degrees, even if they do not directly participate in such behavior. Men have less of an incentive to be sexually and socially careful around women relative to their counterparts in the West—a successful rape charge meaningfully affecting their lives is largely impossible. When men ascend to patriarchal positions in their families, the absence of women’s voices in marriages enables patriarchs to maintain wealth amongst allies and establish cross-clan relations.⁴⁶ Marriages are carefully selected with no bride input, and often result in strategic land and property transfers. In addition, because, “women’s bodies may be considered as resources for reproduction, domestic labor, and access to other

⁴² Glaze, “Historical Determinism and Women’s Rights in Sharia Law.”

⁴³ Glaze.

⁴⁴ Baloushah et al., “Learn to Live with It.”

⁴⁵ Baloushah et al.

⁴⁶ Mayeda and Vijaykumar, “A Review of the Literature on Honor-Based Violence.”

resources”, patriarchs without this source of warped human capital are necessarily worse off than their counterparts possessing this avenue for economic and social ascent.⁴⁷

Human Rights Abuses

This *wali* (English translation: guardian) system has resulted in other particularly horrific situations, where a father married his eight-year old daughter to a 47-year old man to have his debts forgiven.⁴⁸ While the mother sought an annulment, the Saudi court refused, because only the father, the legal *wali*, possessed the right to do so. Likewise, strict enforcement of the *wali* system has resulted in inequities in the healthcare sphere, where women have had critical surgeries postponed due to the absence of a *wali* and/or his consent.⁴⁹ In Saudi Arabia, governmental policy includes a careful surveillance net, where text alerts from authorities enable *walis* to capture upward of 1000 women annually from escaping the country.⁵⁰ Other examples of government-sanctioned violence is seen in Egypt, where female protestors are sometimes still subject to forced virginity tests when detained (i.e. after sit-ins and protests) despite the practice being officially outlawed several years prior.⁵¹

The 2011 virginity tests are the highest-profile example: about 20 female protestors were arrested and subject to acts of human rights abuses.⁵² In addition to being verbally abused with accusations of thievery and prostitution, the women were electrocuted at their breasts and legs and strategically photographed with bottles of alcohol, presumably to be disseminated to the Egyptian public to harm the revolutionary cause.⁵³ Male doctors examined the women’s genitals, despite some of them voicing concerns that the *Quran*

⁴⁷ Mayeda and Vijaykumar.

⁴⁸ “Saudi Judge Refuses to Annul 8-Year-Old’s Marriage - CNN.Com.”

⁴⁹ “World Report 2013.”

⁵⁰ “What to Know About Saudi Arabia’s ‘Woman-Tracking’ App.”

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, “Egypt.”

⁵² “مصر: التحقيق العسكري في ‘اختبارات العذرية’ لن يحقق العدالة.” | Human Rights Watch.”

⁵³ “فتاة مصرية تروي تفاصيل ‘فحص العذرية العسكري’ ‘فيديو’”

conflicted with this practice, as men and women should never see each other naked (except when married). Nonetheless, the military justified the practice in an official statement, declaring that the virginity tests prevented potential wrongful accusations of military rape (as the examined women signed the results).⁵⁴ This instance is important to understand, as it is in line with other practices seen above: preventing a threat from women to materialize. Unlike the earlier examples, however, this behavior was deemed pragmatic by the Egyptian military despite *not* being in line with common religious ideology.

Societal Reform - How and Why

While some women and men in Muslim countries advocate for feminist progress, secular feminists often have trouble gaining support relative to Muslim feminists.⁵⁵ Secular feminists are often vilified as heretics corrupted by Western ideals, so being a Muslim feminist is superior from a game theory angle, at the very least—societal acceptance is of utmost importance in such deeply collectivist countries. Because the *Quran* can sometimes be interpreted through a more egalitarian lens for women, Muslim feminists attempt to toe the line between religious authority and lesser positive change, which is better than no change.

Nonetheless, the Saudi system of violence towards women has been slowly adapted over the years, largely due to political pressure. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has several personal and economic incentives to do so: as one of the youngest heads of state, being a moderate reformer while remaining within some *sharia* confines allows him to set the foundations for his long-term legacy, and the slow and limited integration of women into the Saudi economy increases employment—it is most urgent that the nation adapts to a future where the petrostate needs to become more service-oriented, which necessitates a larger,

⁵⁴ CNN, “Egyptian General Admits ‘virginity Checks’ Conducted on Protesters.”

⁵⁵ Ahmed-Ghosh, “Dilemmas of Islamic and Secular Feminists and Feminisms.”

more skilled workforce.⁵⁶ Reductions in violence must be gradual to prevent religious backlash: over the past few years, full-body *niqabs* with eye-slits are no longer required (but certainly preferred), and colored *abayas* are also tolerated, deviating from the all-black standard.^{57 58} Similarly, the religious structures are under more scrutiny: overly conservative imams have been sacked, and the justice system is being slowly modernized into a precedent-based system.⁵⁹ However, a large caveat must be noted: because Saudi Arabia has no conventional written legal code barring *sharia* and religious texts, religious *mutawa* are likely to still enforce *sharia* variably.

As seen with recent changes, conservative Islam is not invulnerable. Yes, religious texts have enabled the patriarchal system in such countries, but it is often only followed when convenient. In cases where it harms the long-run economic outlook, textual Islam is deprioritized. When trade deals require a certain level of womens' rights, religious precedent can be altered. Religion is a convenient cloak for perpetuating and justifying oppression, but it is not entirely responsible for all harmful individual and state actions. Islam works in tandem but also conflicts with government and human interests. It no longer is the final arbiter that it once was.

IPV Sources and Non-Religious Risk Factors

IPV, like many other forms of violence, does not occur in a vacuum. To begin, IPV incidence is conclusively higher within rural communities and among lower socioeconomic groups for a multitude of reasons. More education than the husband shields women from IPV to some extent, as well as less tolerance for IPV in the first place (lesser educated women in

⁵⁶ Cardová, "Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia | Ústav mezinárodních vztahů - Expertise to impact."

⁵⁷ Kelly, "Progress for Saudi Women Is Uneven, Despite Cultural Changes and More Jobs."

⁵⁸ "Saudi Women Should Have Choice Whether to Wear Abaya Robe - Crown Prince."

⁵⁹ Brown, "Saudi Arabia's Religious Reforms Are Touching Nothing but Changing Everything - Islamic Institutions in Arab States."

Bangladesh consistently justify the punishment they receive).⁶⁰ Religious marriages (intuitively draws more religiously conservative families) report higher rates of IPV relative to civil marriages.

Lack of education and geographical isolation also dampen the effectiveness of legislation deterring IPV: research illuminates the concerning trend of rural women being unaware of legislation preventing IPV in the first place, as well as lacking access to legal services, representation, and participation in courts.⁶¹ While there are some good-faith attempts to discourage IPV legally, there are still many points of failure. In addition, “only men who surpass secondary education are less likely to perpetrate violence in countries with laws against IPV”.⁶² Without the requisite knowledge that practicing IPV will result in legal punishment, IPV will continue. More intuition can be applied: educating women results in less tolerance for IPV and more prosecution of IPV, and this results in lesser utility captured by the men currently and historically benefitting from this instrument of oppression. The interests of some individuals conflict with the welfare of an entire half of a country’s subjects.

The collectivist nature of households in the Middle East exacerbates the violence that married women suffer. A common theme: battered wives hardly receive sympathy from their parents, who tell their daughters, “to shut up and to return back to [your] husband”.⁶³ Similarly, the outsized role of in-laws (who often live with their married sons), especially the mother-in-law, result in a secondary source of female oppression, a dynamic seen through other parts of Asia and Africa as well. In such collectivist countries, witnessing parental IPV and emotional abuse were stronger risk markers for male IPV perpetrators than in more

⁶⁰ Islam, Ahmed, and Mistry, “Factors Associated with Women’s Approval on Intimate Partner Violence in Bangladesh.”

⁶¹ Kovacs, “The Macro-Level Drivers of Intimate Partner Violence.”

⁶² Kovacs.

⁶³ Baloushah et al., “Learn to Live with It.”

individualistic societies.⁶⁴ Sons who witnessed IPV amongst their parents were more likely to perpetrate IPV when *they* married.

In Iran, COVID-19 lockdowns and subsequent unemployment resulted in 25.5% of women with no prior IPV experience being first-time victims.⁶⁵ In Saudi Arabia and Turkey, IPV perpetrators were more likely to be smokers, drinkers, and drug abusers as well.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Altogether, this supports Dutton (1994), which theorizes IPV being multilayered:

The first layer is the broader culture (macrosystem). The second layer is the subculture (exosystem), which includes workplace, support system, and institutions that connect victims to the larger culture. The third layer is the family (microsystem), which includes family and relationship dynamics. The fourth layer includes individual characteristics (ontogenetic) such as developmental history, mental and physical health, substance abuse, and attitudes that influence individuals' response to stressors they experience in the exosystem and microsystem.⁶⁷

This theory encapsulates the situation in many Muslim-majority countries. The macrosystem, with the deeply authoritarian government intertwined with religious protocol, results in segregated public settings and violent institutions (“morality police”) at the exosystem level. Within the microsystem, families work in an adversarial manner towards individual young women, and husbands and fathers wield ultimate power over the livelihoods of girls and women. The ontogenetic layer is not unique to Islam—trauma is universal. A patriarchal society is not limited to Islamic countries, yet nowhere in the world are the power structures that systematically oppress women so prevalent and unquestionable than in these nations. From unpunished honor killings to unchecked IPV and *de jure* discrimination, Islam’s advanced role in the legal system and influence on public sentiment to the detriment of women is unmatched today.

⁶⁴ Mallory et al., “A Meta-Analysis of Cross Cultural Risk Markers for Intimate Partner Violence.”

⁶⁵ Fereidooni et al., “The COVID-19 Pandemic, Socioeconomic Effects, and Intimate Partner Violence Against Women.”

⁶⁶ Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, Türkyılmaz, and Heise, “What Puts Women at Risk of Violence From Their Husbands?”

⁶⁷ Dutton, “Patriarchy and Wife Assault.”

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