

# Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence Against Women in Lebanon

Violence Against Women

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## Abstract

This study explored the socialization of Lebanese men's attitudes toward gender equality to understand violence against women in Middle Eastern countries. Two hundred seventy-three men completed a survey, and 73 participated in seven focus groups. Survey results showed that participants' education, parents' expectations for gender-typed behavior, school discipline, and exposure to community violence predicted the men's attitudes toward gender inequality. In focus group discussions, participants expressed that masculinity imposed a taxing role wherein they perceived themselves as "victims" of a traditional culture where norms grant men control and power over women.

## Keywords

masculinity, gender-based violence, Lebanese culture

Violence against women (VAW) is widespread throughout the Middle East and North African region (MENA; Elsanousi & Anami, 2004; Somach & Zeid, 2009). Large-scale population-based surveys carried out in Jordan, Egypt, and Palestine and small-scale studies of select groups of women have reported high prevalence rates of VAW.

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A study of 1,415 Lebanese women who were interviewed in primary care centers found that 35% had been victims of domestic violence (Usta, Farver, & Pashayan, 2007). The Yemeni Ministry of the Interior reported that 130 women were killed in 2,694 incidents of violence and sexual assault (Arrabyee, 2008). In a random sample drawn from primary care centers in Aleppo, Syria, 23% of the women reported they had been victims of physical abuse (Maziak & Asfar, 2003).

Arab countries incur high costs associated with VAW, particularly with regard to the negative impact on women's psychological, reproductive, and physical health (El-Zanaty & Way, 2006; Haj-Yahia, 1999, 2000, 2002; Rachana, Suraiya, Hirsham, Abdulaziz, & Haj 2002; Usta et al., 2007). VAW in the Middle East has been attributed, in part, to gender inequality (Arab Human Development Report, 2005; Nazir, 2005) reflected in and supported by the traditional norms of Arab culture (Kaplan, Khawaja, & Linos, 2011). These norms include stereotyped gender roles, maintenance of the patriarchal family structure, and values placed on the sanctity of the family (Elsanousi & Anami, 2004). In all cultural communities, predominant norms, values, and beliefs are instantiated in childrearing practice and form the basis for socializing subsequent generations. At present, however, little is known about how the socialization of cultural norms shapes Arab men's gender roles and, in turn, their behavior and attitudes toward women and gender equality. Therefore, to begin to understand the contextual factors that may explain why men commit VAM, Oxfam GB commissioned the pilot project carried out in the current study.

To guide this effort, a conceptual framework was developed by drawing on several theoretical perspectives—socialization and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), and power control theory (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Socialization is the process by which individuals acquire the beliefs, values, and behaviors considered desirable and appropriate by their culture (Shaffer, 2005), and which allow them to adapt to and function effectively in their society. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory maintains that while socialization originates in the family, it also takes place on many levels. That is, as children's social worlds broaden, school and community settings, peers, and the media become influential in shaping their thinking and behavior, all of which are embedded in a cultural setting. According to social learning theory, individuals are also socialized via vicarious experiences, where observing the experiences of others can substitute for their own direct experience. A key characteristic of social learning is its efficacy—by observing, imitating, and modeling the behavior of others, particularly if the consequences are positively reinforced, individuals are likely to also perform that behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Current research has shown an association between adolescent boys' experience of violence in their families or community of origin and their subsequent spousal victimization (Macmillan & Kruttschnitt, 2005). Youth who have been personally assaulted or witnessed assaults within their families may learn to resolve interpersonal conflict using aggression and therefore are more likely to behave in a similar fashion later in their own close relationships. Moreover, interpersonal aggressive behavior may be enhanced when it is supported by cultural values and beliefs about gender roles and/or when aggressive behavior is not actively prevented or punished.

The mass media (television, video games, and popular films) that glorify masculinity may also contribute to the use of aggression in problem-solving, coping, and attitudes toward VAW. Studies carried out in the United States (e.g., Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988) and recent work in the MENA region (Anderson et al., 2003) lend support for the socializing effect of the media on aggressive behavior.

Power control theory suggests that perpetrators of abuse consciously use violence to exercise and maintain control and power over other people (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). 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). Male-perpetrator/female-victim violence is viewed as gender-based violence because it evolves in settings where women hold subordinate social status and predominant beliefs, norms, and social institutions support a patriarchal structure where women are treated as second-class citizens (Araji, 2000).

In many parts of the MENA, patriarchal family systems and tribal culture prevail. In patriarchal systems where men are ascribed power over others because of their sex as well as by their family, tribe, or clan status (Araji, 2000), VAW is a common occurrence (Niaz, 2003). Moreover, patriarchal societies tend to be indifferent to VAW, particularly to wife beating. Women are perceived as the property of men; therefore, spousal mistreatment is considered legitimate and acceptable (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker, & Ghachem, 2003). For men, patriarchal systems also serve to delegate and maintain their power and to reinforce their gender roles or masculinity (Ruxton, 2004). Typically, in Middle Eastern settings, men are expected to dominate, control, and act as the authority figures and decision makers within their families and communities, often to the extent that they come to believe that privilege and power are natural, normal, and justified—thus further legitimizing their behavior (Ruxton, 2004).

VAW in the Middle East may be an associated outcome of the socialization process that is embedded in existing cultural traditions. However, it remains an open question as to how these traditions become manifested in men's behavior and how men think about these issues today. Because there have been few systematic efforts to understand how Middle Eastern men view VAW, the current pilot project recruited a sample of Lebanese men to explore how early socialization contexts may shape their attitudes toward gender equality using a survey questionnaire and focus group discussions.

Due to the absence of empirical research in this area, we did not formulate hypotheses but instead focused on two overarching questions: How do early socialization contexts contribute to men's attitudes toward gender equality, and what aspects of these contexts predict the likelihood of resolving interpersonal conflict with family members and close friends using aggression? The survey addressed four contexts or agents of early socialization: parents, schools, the community, and media identified in Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological model. The focus group discussions, which to some extent paralleled the survey questions, addressed power and authority issues using a power control theory model.

## Method

### *Survey Participants and Procedures*

Participants were 273 men (18-75 years old;  $M = 39.44$ ;  $SD = 13.16$ ) who resided in the Baalbek area of Lebanon. Oxfam GB chose to conduct the study in the Baalbek area because gender inequality is most pronounced there. Also, in Baalbek, 52% of the population is under age 2, 25% of the women in low-income families are illiterate, and 79% of the employed women in low-income families earn less than LBP300,000 (US\$200) per month (International Poverty Center, 2008).

To provide sampling variation within the allocated project budget, researchers divided Baalbek into three geographical areas to reflect the population in each area. Initially, a sample of 300 men was planned with 50% recruited from urban areas ( $n = 150$ ; that is, Baalbek Town and Baalbek Dawras), 30% from semi-urban areas ( $n = 90$ ), and 20% from rural areas ( $n = 60$ ).

The research team was led by Oxfam's Regional Partnership Programme. Twelve research assistants (half women) from the local Lebanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who had research experience and familiarity with the communities were trained to administer the survey during a 1-day session held in Baalbek and 70% ( $n = 182$ ) of the interviews were carried out by male research assistants.

Participants were approached informally at shops, cafes, and community gathering places throughout Baalbek, and the sample was allowed to snowball as friends referred potential participants to the project staff. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand men's views on masculinity, violence, and gender roles, and that they would be asked to complete a survey about their childhood and family life and their perceptions of their roles as men in Lebanese society. They were told the survey was anonymous, their responses would be kept confidential, and any identifying information would not be associated with their responses.

The survey questions were developed especially for this pilot project by Oxfam GB, the KAFA team, and local experts on VAW. Questions touched on several issues including the socialization of men since childhood, their perceptions of gender roles, exposure to violence since childhood, attitudes toward gender-power relations, and ways to end VAW. An initial set of 84 questions was piloted with 20 participants. Thereafter, a finalized version of 77 questions was developed via intensive discussion with the research team. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed proportionally among the 12 data collectors and 273 were completed.

Participants provided basic demographic information regarding their age, religion, employment status, marital status, number of children, years of education, both parents' years of education, and place of residence.

To examine the participants' perceptions of their parents' expectations for them as adults, they responded as either 1 = *yes* or 0 = *no* to four questions: "Did your parents expect you to . . ." "be like your father," "work in a gender-specific (i.e., male-dominated) occupation," "be strong," and "assert and maintain control over women?" These items were summed to form the composite variable *Parent expectations for gender-typed behavior* (range = 0-4;  $M = 2.71$ ;  $SD = 1.09$ ).

## Parenting Styles

To provide an index of participants' perceptions of their parents' childrearing when they were growing up, they rated the extent to which each of their parents' overall behavior was considered to be "harsh" or "easy going." To form a single *Parenting Style* variable, their responses were coded as 1 = *both parents were easy going* (44%), 2 = *one parent was harsh* (47%), 3 = *both parents were harsh* (9%). In the analyses reported below, *Parenting Style* was treated as a continuous variable ( $M = 1.64$ ;  $SD = 0.63$ ).

## Parents' Discipline Practices

To examine participants' perceptions of their parents' discipline strategies when they were growing up, they were asked to rate six items using a 5-point scale (0 = *never*; 4 = *very often*); for example, "Did your mother/father . . ." "hit you with a hand," "hit you with a stick," "scream and curse at you?" These items were summed to form the composite variable *Parents' Discipline* (range = 0-18;  $M = 8.56$ ;  $SD = 4.34$ ;  $\alpha = .81$ ).

## Family Conflict

To examine participants' perceptions of family conflict in their homes when they were growing up, they rated three items on a 5-point scale (0 = *never*; 4 = *very often*) for the frequency in which they witnessed their family members fighting, engaging in violent behavior, or threatening weapon use. The items were summed to form the composite variable *Family Conflict* (range = 0-4;  $M = 1.33$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ).

## School Influences

Participants were asked to indicate whether they had attended a mixed-sex school (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*), and then to rate their male and female teachers' classroom behavior on a 5-point scale (0 = *never*; 4 = *always*); for example, "My female/male teacher . . ." "hit me with stick," "screamed and shouted at me," "threw me out of class," "spoke and communicated advice" (reverse coded). The items were summed to form a composite variable *School Discipline* (range = 0-12;  $M = 2.65$ ;  $SD = 3.03$ ).

## Media and Community Influences

Participants rated two items on a 5-point scale (0 = *never*; 4 = *many times*) for how frequently they watched violent films and violent television programs while growing up (range = 0-4;  $M = 1.68$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ; that is, *Media exposure*), and for how frequently they saw people in their neighborhood/community behaving aggressively (range = 0-4;  $M = 2.45$ ;  $SD = 1.03$ ; that is, *Community violence exposure*).

## Attitudes Toward Gender Equality

Participants responded to 23 questions about their attitudes toward women and gender equality. Items were rated on a 3-point scale (0 = *strongly disagree*; 2 = *strongly*

agree); for example, "If there is no financial reason, . . ." "women should not work," "women still require male protection," "it is still accepted to monitor women nowadays," "women should stay loyal to their men even when mistreated," "men should be richer than their wives," "it is normal for men to inherit, but not women," "it is accepted to force a dress code on females." Some items were reverse coded and a high score indicated an endorsement of gender inequality. The items were summed to form the composite variable *Attitudes Toward Gender Equality* (range = 25-46;  $M = 40.23$ ;  $SD = 3.82$ ;  $\alpha = .78$ ).

### ***Conflict Resolution With Family Members***

Participants rated three items (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*) for how they typically reacted when their wishes were not met; for example, "I became angry and I . . ." "behaved violently," "smashed household items," or "avoided the situation" (i.e., stayed in my room or left the house; reverse coded). These items were summed to form the composite variable *Conflict Resolution With Family* (range = 0-6;  $M = 3.17$ ;  $SD = 2.01$ ).

### ***Conflict Resolution With Friends***

Participants rated four items on a 3-point scale (0 = *never*; 2 = *always*) about how they typically resolved disputes with their friends; for example, had fistfights, screamed/shouted, stopped communicating, and tried to talk/dialogue (reverse coded). The items were summed to form the composite variable *Conflict Resolution With Friends* (range = 0-3;  $M = 0.57$ ;  $SD = 0.81$ ).

## **Focus Group Participants and Procedures**

Focus group discussions were conducted to validate the findings obtained from the survey and to collect in-depth information on their perceptions of (a) gender-typed roles and the responsibilities that are associated with them; that is, what is an ideal man/woman, and what are the costs/benefits of these gender-typed roles? (b) VAW and how to address VAW, and (c) men as potential "victims." These questions were formulated by the research team that developed the survey.

Seventy-three men who resided in the Baalbek area but did not complete the survey questionnaire were recruited using the same methods as the survey data collection. Participants were approached informally in public areas throughout Baalbek and the sample also snowballed as friends referred potential participants. Participants were told that the purpose of the focus group discussions was to understand men's views on masculinity, violence, gender roles, and perceptions of their roles as men in Lebanese society. They were told their responses would be kept confidential and any identifying information would not be associated with their responses.

Seven focus groups consisted of 8-16 members ( $M = 10.5$ ) and represented the same urban, semi-urban, and rural areas; varied religious groups; occupations (office work,

agriculture, education, government service); and age range as the survey participants. In four of the groups, discussants were organized by age (e.g., 18-21; 25-33; >41; 32-45 years) and the remaining groups were composed of mixed ages (19-38; 24-59; 24-47 years). Focus groups were facilitated by two male research assistants who had administered the surveys. The facilitators were trained by the project staff. Focus groups lasted approximately 2½ hr.

Discussions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were read by two members of the research team and themes were identified. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus following discussion with the principal investigator. Thematic analysis was used to group responses into common themes, and then themes were grouped into topics using a version of the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After completing seven focus group discussions, the research team agreed that saturation of ideas had been reached.

## Survey Results

### *Sample Demographics*

The men ranged in age from 18-75 years ( $M = 39.44$ ;  $SD = 13.16$ ); 76% were Muslim, 18% were Christian, and 6% did not answer. Their years of education ranged from 1 = *completion of elementary school* to 3 = *university courses/degree* ( $M = 2.14$ ;  $SD = 0.75$ ); most had attended mixed-sex schools (89%); 12% were unemployed or retired, 50% were labors (unskilled workers, farmers, drivers), 14% were skilled workers (office managers, mechanics, teachers), and 25% were professionals (teachers, doctors, attorneys). Most of the men (65%) lived in urban areas, and 67% were or had been married with a family size of 2-6 children ( $M = 3.69$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ). Their mothers' years of education ranged from 0 = *did not attend school* (52%) to 3 = *secondary school completion and above* ( $M = 0.58$ ;  $SD = 0.67$ ), and their fathers' years of education ranged from 0 = *did not attend school* (33%) to 3 = *secondary school completion and above* ( $M = 1.82$ ;  $SD = 0.68$ ).

### *Preliminary Analyses*

Table 1 displays the intercorrelations among the variables. Participants' years of education were positively correlated with their parents' years of education, and both of these variables were negatively correlated with parents' expectations for gender-typed behavior, discipline, family conflict, conflict resolution with family and friends, and attitudes toward gender equality. The parent variables (expectations for gender-typed behavior, discipline, and family conflict) were also positively intercorrelated, and each was positively associated with attitudes toward gender equality and conflict resolution with family and friends. School discipline was positively associated with conflict resolution with family and friends, and attitudes toward gender equality. Media exposure was positively associated with conflict resolution with family.

Table 1. Correlations Among the Variables (N = 273).

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	—											
2. Education	-.32**	—										
3. Parents' education	-.33**	.51**	—									
4. Parents' expectations	.08	-.19**	-.22**	—								
5. Parenting style	.04	-.07	-.02	.02	—							
6. Parents' discipline	.06	-.29**	-.22**	.22**	.06	—						
7. Family conflict	.09	-.24**	-.31**	.12	.03	.56**	—					
8. School discipline	-.15*	.24**	.17**	-.06	-.01	-.37**	-.31**	—				
9. Media exposure	-.03	.07	.12	-.11	.05	-.02	.05	.05	—			
10. Community violence exposure	.14*	-.11	-.24**	.11	.03	.34**	.38**	.32**	.21**	—		
11. Conflict resolution—family	-.07	-.34**	-.29**	-.14*	.04	.48**	.51**	.47**	.14*	.47**	—	
12. Conflict resolution—friends	-.03	-.25**	-.19**	-.12*	.02	.41**	.32**	.34**	-.10	.28**	.45**	—
13. Attitudes toward gender equality	.08	-.41**	-.36**	.20**	.04	.35**	.31**	.43**	.04	.36**	-.55**	-.31**

\*p &lt; .05. \*\*p &lt; .01.

ANOVA tests showed that participants who attended a mixed-sex school reported more frequent school discipline ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 2.99$  vs.  $M = 1.64$ ;  $SD = 3.10$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 5.12, p < .05$ , and less family conflict ( $M = 1.25$ ;  $SD = 1.20$  vs.  $M = 1.82$ ;  $SD = 1.27$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 7.32, p < .01$ , than did those who attended a male-only school. Among the 253 participants who indicated religious affiliation, ANOVA tests showed Muslims ( $n = 204$ ) reported more community violence exposure ( $M = 2.59$ ;  $SD = 1.03$  vs.  $M = 2.02$ ;  $SD = 0.86$ ),  $F(1, 252) = 13.24, p < .000$ ; family conflict ( $M = 1.50$ ;  $SD = 1.26$  vs.  $M = 0.83$ ;  $SD = 0.87$ ),  $F(1, 252) = 13.35, p < .001$ ; and higher scores for attitudes toward gender equality ( $M = 20.72$ ;  $SD = 4.59$  vs.  $M = 18.31$ ;  $SD = 4.17$ ),  $F(1, 252) = 11.30, p < .001$ , than did Christians ( $n = 49$ ). There were no other significant findings for religion.

ANOVA tests also showed that the participants' parents who lived in rural areas had fewer years of education ( $M = 0.58$ ;  $SD = 0.56$ ) than did those who lived urban areas ( $M = 0.74$ ;  $SD = 0.62$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 4.44, p < .04$ . There were no other significant findings for residence.

### ***Early Socialization Contexts, Attitudes Toward Gender Equality, and Likelihood of Resolving Conflict Using Aggression***

To examine how early socialization contexts contribute to men's attitudes toward gender equality and their conflict resolution with family and friends, step-wise multiple regression analyses were used. Multiple regression analysis examined the linear relations between the dependent variables and the independent or criterion variables, where *Beta* described the strength or level of contribution of each criterion variable and adjusted  $R^2$  showed the proportion of the variance that was predicted by the significant variables in the model. Because the participants' and their parents' years of education were highly correlated (i.e.,  $r = .51$ ), participants' years of education was entered in Step 1. Family socialization influences (parents' expectations for gender-typed behavior, parenting style, and discipline) were entered in Step 2, school influences (school type: mixed-sex/male-only) and school discipline were entered in Step 3, community violence exposure was entered in Step 4, and media exposure was entered in Step 5.

As shown in Table 2, there were several significant findings. First, participants' years of education, their parents' expectations, school discipline, and exposure to community violence each significantly predicted attitudes toward gender equality and accounted for 34% ( $\text{Adj } R^2 = .34$ ) of the variance in the model. Second, participants' education, their parents' discipline, school type and discipline, and exposure to community and media violence each significantly predicted resolving family conflicts using aggressive behavior and accounted for 43% ( $\text{Adj } R^2 = .43$ ) of the variance in the model. Third, participants' education, parent discipline, school discipline, and exposure to community and media violence each significantly predicted resolving conflict with friends using aggressive behavior and accounted for 22% ( $\text{Adj } R^2 = .22$ ) of the variance in the model.

**Table 2.** Predictors of Attitudes Toward Gender Equity and Likelihood of Resolving Interpersonal Conflict With Family and Friends Using Aggression (N = 273).

Variable	Attitudes toward gender equity			Conflict with family resolved with aggression			Conflict with friends resolved with aggression		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
Step 1									
Education	-1.85	0.33	-.30***	0.57	0.14	.21***	0.14	0.06	.13*
Step 2									
Parents' expectations	0.41	0.22	.10*	-0.04	0.09	-.03	0.02	0.04	.03
Parenting style	-0.37	0.36	-.05	0.18	0.15	.06	0.08	0.07	.05
Parents' discipline	0.09	0.06	.09	0.11	0.03	.24***	0.05	0.01	.26***
Step 3									
School type	0.76	0.67	.06	-0.48	0.27	-.08†	0.12	0.13	.05
School discipline	-0.43	0.09	-.28***	0.18	0.04	.27***	0.06	0.02	.20***
Step 4									
Community violence exposure	0.83	0.25	.19**	0.51	0.11	.26***	0.08	0.05	.10†
Step 5									
Media exposure	0.19	0.20	.05	0.19	0.08	.11**	0.07	0.04	.10*
	F(8, 266) = 18.38; p = .000; Adj R <sup>2</sup> = .34			F(8, 266) = 226.51; p = .000; Adj R <sup>2</sup> = .43			F(8, 266) = 10.44; p = .000; Adj R <sup>2</sup> = .22		

†p < .10. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

## Focus Group Results

### *Perceptions of Gender-Typed Roles, Associated Responsibilities, and Power Differentials*

Discussants described an “ideal man” as being a good provider for his family, one who works and strives for his home, a decision maker, an authority figure, and a protector who is powerful and strong, and one who punishes family members when they make mistakes. Most agreed that a man who lacked these characteristics would be treated as incapable and cowardly, and would be socially marginalized. Most agreed that the major benefit of the male role was the associated respect and support of their wider society. Few discussants could think of any negative consequence associated with their roles. A few men acknowledged the recent social and economic changes that have contributed to the difficulty in providing for their families and the fading of the image of the man as all powerful and the sole provider for the family.

An “ideal woman” was described as being a good housewife and mother; one who is sacrificing, devoted to her family, obedient to her husband, and maintains the reputation and dignity of her husband. Attributes characteristic of personality or education were mentioned only by the younger aged focus groups. Discussants agreed that women had power within the house, whereas men had power outside the home. As one man stated, “A woman’s strength comes from raising her children and her ability to control them; whereas men are the master of the household.” In general, discussants contended that power is inherited through their upbringing as well as conferred by their religious doctrines. Most also argued that their right to power is based on their role as providers of the household, that is, “money is power, and when women work for pay, the balance is upset.” This idea is further illustrated in the following response: “If the woman starts earning money, then there may be a 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.”

Discussants had differing opinions about women’s work. One declared, “she will be back from work tired and unable to give affection and tenderness to her children,” whereas another mentioned, “she is likely to rely on house helpers to raise the children.” Other concerns about women working were related to potential misconduct or harassment in the workplace where the “husband could be pushed into trouble when the wife cannot protect herself.” Others worried about their loss of authority and maintained that the ideal woman was 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.” Opinions about the changing role of women in the society were mixed. Some men considered women’s educational attainment and work as positive changes that ultimately affect society. However, some also worried about losing control and authority; for example, “a woman may break free from a man,” “may disobey her family,” and “consider herself free to decide for herself.” Some also expressed a need to put limits on the freedom of women in fear of their misconduct.

*Perceptions about VAW and “the man as victim.”* Responses to questions about VAW and how to address this problem were mixed. More than half considered education at home to be a key solution to VAW and nearly half favored the idea of providing education against violence in the schools. Most men rated law enforcement lowest on the list of possible solutions to end violence. However, some participants noted that “the absence of rules forbidding beating women encourages men to beat their wives, thus making children violent, too.” When accounting for VAW, some suggested that men who are likely to use violence to resolve conflicts may be imitating their fathers, they may have been raised in a violent environment, they want to appear strong and in control, or they have been influenced by peer pressure. Many respondents also blamed women for “provoking” the men’s use of violence. Justifications for this violent behavior included a woman’s delay in serving food, disobedience and disrespect, and an alleged liking of violence.

When asked to respond to the veracity of the statement that “the man is a victim,” very few of the men disagreed with the statement. Several mentioned the social norms and rules that pressure men to be the sole provider; that is, one who “sacrifices his health and money for his kids and wife,” “secures all the household demands regardless of circumstances,” and “bears the consequences of the behaviors of his family members, and avenges insults to the honor of the family.” Several men considered themselves to be victims of a society that pushes them to fulfill the very specific role of provider and protector of women. Some mentioned the recent changes in Lebanese women’s roles as they have recently become family providers, and they wondered what their role would be as men with respect to this change.

## Discussion

This project focused on aspects of early socialization contexts to understand how each may contribute to Lebanese men’s attitudes toward gender equality. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998; Lytton & Romney, 1991), the results showed that gender role behavior and the elevated status that is conferred on men and male gender roles (Blakemore, Berenbaum, & Liben, 2009) seem to originate in the home environment. Participants’ responses to the survey and focus group questions about their early experiences in their homes—specifically, perceptions of their parents’ childrearing practices and traditional expectations for gender-typed behavior—support this conclusion. Both from a social learning theory approach and a power control model, participants were exposed to models of male dominance and violence, and a hierarchy of power wherein they continue to be viewed as economically and socially superior to women.

As mentioned above, the first goal of socialization in any society is to encourage children to acquire the traits that enable them to be productive members of their society. A second goal involves gender-typing children by emphasizing particular attributes that the society associates with typical male and female behavior. Although Western individualistic societies have gradually endorsed more egalitarian gender roles and norms, this pattern may not be apparent in other, more collectivistic

societies. As our results suggest, for the most part Lebanese men continue to endorse the traditional gender stereotypes and the associated status that they learned about and adopted early in life. These concepts are expressed in attitudes toward gender inequality and behaviorally as VAW.

Also noteworthy is the pattern of results showing that traditional attitudes toward gender inequality were predicted by the participants' education, their parents' expectations for gender-typed behavior, heavy-handed school discipline, and exposure to violence in their communities. Social class differences have been noted in prior research on gender typing and attitudes toward gender equality (Basow, 1992; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). These findings suggest that higher socio-economic status (SES; measured here by years of education) promotes more flexible gender role attitudes, presumably because high SES adults have a wide array of educational and occupational options available to them. On a societal level, improved education and the increase of women in the Lebanese workforce engaging in paid employment may have led to some flexibility in attitudes toward overall gender inequality, and in this respect, men expressed their concerns about losing power and authority. These changing social conditions mean that men will have to adopt new roles that are still unclear in their minds. Future work is clearly needed to monitor and track these changes and to measure their effects over time on VAW.

Across societies, boys face stronger pressure than girls to adhere to gender-appropriate codes of conduct (Bussey & Bandura, 1992). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that some Lebanese men reported their male gender roles were a burden and they considered themselves "victims of the stereotyped roles dictated by society." Current policy- and education-based efforts suggest that gender-based violence is related to assumptions and expectations concerning stereotyped traditional gender roles (Council of Europe, n.d.) and the extent to which gender-typed roles regulate male and female behavior in line with the expectations of their religion and the broader culture. Applied to the MENA region, "gendered-parenting" typically reflects the wider cultural value system and affects the roles and responsibilities of men and women in a way that gives privilege and advantage to men. In other words, boys are trained to be aggressive and dominant, whereas girls are taught to be docile, gentle, and polite. These expectations that serve to highlight the supremacy of men form a challenge to women in societies where they are expected to be passive, submissive, and dominated. An example of traditional expectations in the Arab world is illustrated in a recent study conducted on women's social injustice. When considering senior positions in the workforce, women reported resistance from their family members who argued that working outside their home meant they would spend less time with their children and could present a significant challenge to their husband's societal role and ability to provide for the family (Akar & Mouchantaf, 2013). In general, in MENA societies, men are expected to be providers, whereas women are expected to raise children. Moreover, where a traditional value system is upheld and encouraged by gendered parenting, gender-based violence also seems to increase, particularly in societies that misunderstand religious teachings or where unemployment, poverty, and lack of education are significant problems.

However, there is some indication in Lebanese society that the image of the “all powerful man” has somewhat diminished over time with access to education and contact with Western media. These societal-level changes seem to be reflected in our findings. For example, with regard to the second research question, the results showed that using aggression to resolve conflicts with family and close friends was predicted by participants’ education, their parents’ discipline practices, experiences of heavy-handed discipline in school, and exposure to community and media violence. Schools were also settings where heavy-handed punishment was carried out to the extent that more than two thirds of the men surveyed reported being hit with a hand or a stick as a child. Abundant research carried out in the United States has shown that being raised in chronically violent/coercive environments (e.g., Guerra, Huesmann, & Spindler, 2003; Patterson, 1982) can be predisposing factors for aggressive behavior. These findings also support a learning theory model and indicate how the family and schools play a role in modeling aggressive problem-solving and conflict resolution.

It is unclear, however, whether these results generalize to VAW in the wider MENA region. Lebanon has some important characteristics that set it apart from other MENA countries. For example, there is no official state religion. There are 16 sects or religious groups and the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, are equally powerful. Historically, Lebanon has been more open than other MENA countries to Europe and the United States. Currently, the Arab world is experiencing rapid social and economic change. Therefore, this research should be elaborated and replicated across the MENA region.

Whether the results generalize to Lebanese society also remains an open question. The focus on the Baalbek region of Lebanon can be viewed as both a strength and a potential limitation. As Oxfam was planning a program to engage men in other regions in the Arab world, the Baalbek area was considered a good initial setting to understand UAW because it seemed to approximate (or parallel) the sociocultural and economic conditions in the wider MENA region. However, given that Baalbek to a large extent is considered to be an area of high poverty, it is possible that there may have been a different pattern of results if additional governorates across Lebanon had been included in the study.

The results are also limited in that they rely on self-reports that were largely retrospective and may be biased by such factors as social desirability and poor memory. It is possible that a more subtle and nuanced understanding of the men’s behavior could have been obtained had the qualitative data been collected face-to-face rather than in focus groups. Moreover, using women to administer 30% of the surveys may have biased or influenced the men’s responses. However, ANOVA tests comparing the gender of the interviewer for all of the variables in the study showed only one significant difference: Parents’ expectations for gender-typed behaviors were higher when the men were interviewed by a man ( $M = 2.83$ ;  $SD = 1.03$ ) than a woman ( $M = 2.46$ ;  $SD = 1.21$ ) interviewer,  $F(1, 256) = 5.90, p = .02$ .

We also acknowledge that other theoretical models are potentially relevant and could focus on different phenomena that contribute to VAW. However, we chose to use an ecological model to initially frame this research. It is also worth mentioning that

little empirical research exists on perceptions of gender-based violence in Lebanon. However, there have been some recent efforts by policy advocates to design interventions and initiatives for gender equality. One notable effort involves helping men deal with anger management as part of their commitment to improving violence in society, and the establishment of a Centre for Men.

There is some research to suggest that VAW may increase in societies that experience ongoing conflict in the form of civil wars and political uprisings. For example, in a study of Lebanese women's experience of the 2006 conflict between the Hezbollah and the State of Israel, Usta, Farver, and Zein (2008) found that there was an increase in domestic violence and negative mental and physical health outcomes. Therefore, in future research women's exposure to multiple forms of violence should be examined.

Despite these limitations, this exploratory study represents an initial step in understanding and finding solutions to VAW. To our knowledge, this is the first study in the Arab world to examine men's views on masculinity, violence, and gender roles. In fact, the survey and focus groups generated considerable interest in the Lebanese community. Some respondents mentioned that it was the first time they had been asked about their opinions on a topic related to women in general and to VAW in particular. This response is noteworthy and points to the importance of carrying out more research with Arab men directly.

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