

Violence against Palestinian Women

Violencia contra las mujeres palestinas

BASSAM YOUSEF IBRAHIM BANAT
Al-Quds University
bbanat@arts.alquds.edu

Abstract

The current study explored violence against women in the Palestinian society as a multidimensional phenomenon. An index of a 60-item scale (developed by the researcher) used to measure violence against women was administrated to three hundred and sixty-three randomly selected married women at Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate. The research revealed that Palestinian women are still subject to many forms of violence mostly, physical, psychological and sexual. Of the Palestinian women surveyed, seven in ten women (74.4%) reported partner violence. The study concluded that it is difficult for a battered woman to seek redress or help with any guarantee of privacy. Furthermore, the under-reporting of violence is widespread in a society of patriarchal patterns of kinship, legalized inequality, social subordination and ingrained male dominance. The implications of the findings and probabilities for future empirical research are briefly discussed.

Key words: Violence, Women, Palestine, Culture, Bedouins, Patriarchal society.

Resumen

El artículo estudia la violencia contra las mujeres en la sociedad palestina como un fenómeno multidimensional. Se utiliza un índice con una escala de 60 ítems (elaborado por el investigador) para medir dicha violencia, siendo entrevistadas sesenta y tres mujeres aleatoriamente seleccionadas en Gobernación de Jericó y Al Aghwar. El estudio revela que las mujeres palestinas sufren todavía muchas formas de violencia física, psicológica y sexual. Así, el 74.4% de las entrevistadas manifiesta haber padecido violencia de parte de su cónyuge, y ello en una situación en la que es difícil para una mujer maltratada encontrar apoyos o ayuda con garantías de salvaguardar su privacidad. Además, el registro de estas formas de violencia presenta serias deficiencias en una sociedad inmersa en pautas patriarcales de parentesco, en la aceptación como 'normal' de la desigualdad de género y en el presupuesto de la necesidad de subordinación de las mujeres a los hombres. Finalmente, el artículo debate brevemente acerca de las implicaciones de esta situación y sobre las investigaciones futuras que pueden realizarse al respecto.

Palabras clave: Violencia, Mujeres, Palestina, Cultura, Beduinos, Sociedad patriarcal.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence, along with its negative impacts on both the individual and community has attracted much interest of sociologists, psychologist and social workers as well as local and international organizations. This is evidenced by the numerous published studies worldwide that addressed violence in general and violence against women in particular.

Violence against women and its consequences are not a new phenomenon in any society; in fact it has selected direct consequences on women's physical, mental and reproductive health. Of recent is the growing recognition that acts of violence against women are not isolated events but rather form a pattern of behavior that violates the rights of women, limits their participation in society, and damages their health and well-being (WHO, 2013).

Violence against women is a global phenomenon. It has been experienced for decades by all cultures and societies worldwide. Despite the different causes and forms, violence against women has common denominators among nations. It has even become a general culture in all spheres of social life, especially in households, public and private institutions, mass media and several others.

According to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (WHO, 2013).

Consequently, domestic violence has led to several tragedies and disasters that have had horrendous and unspeakable financial and emotional consequences on individual, institutional and social implications since violence against women is considered an unethical social behavior that violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Statistics published by the World Health Organization to this effect, indicate that casualties of violence costs the state approximately 4% of their gross domestic production (WHO, 2013; Shaheen, 2014).

2. Background and Literature Review

Violence against women is not confined to a specific culture, region or country or to particular groups of women within a society. The root cause of violence against women lies in historically unequal power relations between men and women, and persistent discrimination against women (UNDPI, 2008).

The International Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations (1993), defined violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

The same definition was adopted by the Fourth International Woman Conference in Beijing (1995) which states that violence against women is any gender-based violence that

results in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivation of liberty, whether that occurs in public or in private life.

Globally, the number of battered women is on the rise. According to selected national violence studies, up to 70 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner (WHO, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the cost of violence against women is extremely high. They include the direct cost of services to treat and support abused women and their children and to bring perpetrators to justice. The indirect costs include lost employment and productivity and human pain and suffering. In 2003, the annual cost of intimate partner violence was estimated at \$5.8 billion (USD) and £22.9 billion (GBP) in England and Wales during 2004 (WHO, 2013). Another study in Australia estimated the cost of violence against women and children at \$13.6 billion (AUD) per year (The National Council to reduce violence against women and their children, 2009: 4).

Violence against women continues to be debated among scholars in the social sciences and gender studies. Consequently, several researchers from different countries and cultures have embarked on studying this significant concern towards fellow humans. Their studies have provided evidence of the global nature of this concern. A recent study by Shaheen (2014) revealed that women are still subject to many forms of violence by her husband psychologically, sexually and physically. According to WHO (2013) findings, violence against women is a significant public health problem as well as a fundamental violation of women's human rights. According to Awwad (2012), the first and most frequent realm of violence handed down by husbands was the social domain (83%) of variation.

The findings of the latest survey revealed by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2012) showed that 37 percent of the Palestinian women were exposed to violence by their husbands. 58.6 percent of the women were exposed to psychological violence at least once while 23.5 percent were exposed to physical violence and 11.8 percent to sexual violence. The Human Development Report (2010) concluded that the human being an asset for all nations and a fundamental backbone for human development in light of the escalating violence internationally and the absence of human security.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the Arab Human Development Report (2009) indicated that the Arab region faced escalating challenges that threatened human security as a result of the escalation in violence. The violence has taken its toll on all sectors of society most prominent being women who had no access to personal security whatsoever. Meanwhile, the study of Bostock *et al.* (2009) concluded that the prevalence of domestic abuse against women has been estimated as high as one in four. The risk is particularly high for women who are younger, economically dependent, unemployed and have children.

The reviewed literature has revealed increased violence against women in all societies. The Palestinian society in particular, that is, Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate has the highest rate of violence against women in a conservative Bedouin community.

According to The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy – MIFTAH (2013), violence against women has been on the rise in the Pales-

tinian society in recent years and has raised serious concerns among several Palestinian organizations. The domestic violence survey in the Palestinian society, carried out by The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2006), revealed that 23.3 percent of women stated that they were exposed to physical violence at least once during 2005; 61.7 percent to psychological violence; and 10.5 percent to sexual violence.

An increase in murder against Palestinian women was highlighted by The Women's Centre for Legal Aid Counseling. Twenty-seven women were killed under the guise of the so-called «honor killings» in the Palestinian society in 2013 (15 in West Bank and 12 in Gaza Strip), which was double compared to 2012 when 13 women were killed. The overall number of homicides was 97.

In brief, family and domestic violence against women in the Palestinian society may include: physical abuse by one's husband, father, brother or a male in-law; threat of being killed; rape by one's brother, father, uncle, father-in-law or husband; flee home because of exposure to physical or sexual violence; sexual harassment; emotional apathy; verbal violence; neglect; and social discrimination of roles in the family that favors males over females.

Violence targeting woman is linked to several factors, some of which are related to the prevalent social and economic conditions of society while other factors relate to gender inequality. Moreover, traditional cultural heritage plays a significant role in the prevalence of violence against women in the Palestinian community. According to Hird & Jackson (2001) and Tolman *et al.* (2003), physical and sexual violence against girls and women is shaped by attitudes and social norms, gendered inequalities of power, expected and normalized.

Social theories provide probable reasons for violence against women and suggest approaches to prevent and eradicate the violence. Theories are important, not only because they offer different perspectives for domestic violence, but each provides clear implications for the responses and interventions by practitioners and policy-makers.

In the Palestinian society, violence against women exists as part of patriarchal social structures and is an intentional pattern of behavior utilized to establish and maintain power and control over a female partner. Patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted in the Palestinian society, where the notions of the father and the brother are prevalent. According to these notions, male dominance supports the structure that keeps men in positions of power, authority and control (Banat, 2014). According to Tracy (2007), patriarchy is the ultimate reason for abuse against women. Patriarchy is not responsible for an individual husband's violent action toward his wife. It does, however, create an environment ripe for abuse. A weakened immune system does not create the virus that leads to deadly infection, but it provides the environment in which the virus can thrive and kill. Patriarchal beliefs weaken the marital system so that the deadly virus of violence can gain a stronghold. By the same token, Diab (2011) argued that culture, norms and traditions are the main reasons for violence against women in the Palestinian society, and as such provides a general framework for explaining this violence. Patriarchal culture is an important parameter in this regard since it shapes the general mindset from which Palestinian norms, traditions, laws, and community behaviors stem.

Additionally, Palestinian culture sometimes approves violence against women in certain areas of life, especially in the heritage such as: a lover beating is like eating dry grapes; the cane for those who are disobedient, the cane from Heaven, and it is not the end of the world if a husband hits his wife. Also, blaming the victim is an element in the Palestinian culture which supports violence against women. There are occasions when women deserve to be chastised, even if beatings and other forms of abuse might be considered excessive or uncivilized. This is an indication of the resilience of cultural attitudes based on gender inequality and male entitlement in domestic and social arrangements.

Another important factor is that the increasing prevalence of violence in the Palestinian society as a result of the oppressive policies of the occupation and the various forms it uses to spread a culture of violence among all Palestinian social groups. This has led to an increase in stress and fear among Palestinian children. The Palestinian women are part of a society which lives under Israeli occupation, exposure to high levels of violence and absence of human security. This situation has contributed to promoting a culture of violence among children that is recognizable in their violence-based approach to playing, especially in schools (Natil, 2004; Diab, 2011).

In brief, violence against women is globally pervasive. Moreover, violence is a phenomenon that has a strong inclination towards escalation and growth due to complex and difficult domestic and world conditions. The increasing severity of poverty, backwardness, atrocities, immigration, rise in the cost of living, health and social care, violation of human rights, political persecution and discrimination on the basis of gender have brought about a devastating impact on women victims.

Violence against women is not a minute problem that only occurs in some pockets of society, but is a global public health challenge of epidemic proportions, which requires urgent action. It is time for the world to take action: a life free of violence is a basic human right, one that every woman, man and child deserves (WHO, 2013). In this context, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon (2008) sent a strong message that there is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, and never tolerable.

The Arabic discourse has followed a new track since the beginning of the second half of the previous century: it demands full recognition of women political and civil rights based on the fact that woman is a human being equal to man. It has also tried to identify the forms of violence against women so that assistance can be rendered to women organizations established for the purpose of defending women rights and prevail over all hardships and hurdles facing women. However, this has remained a verbal promise than actual action being taken. There are several fundamental obstacles which constitute a stumbling block before the implementation of such rights in the context of a conservative patriarchal society.

In the Palestinian society, the Ministry of Women's Affairs issued a national strategy to combat violence against women (VAW) for the period 2011-2019. The foremost objective of this strategy is to combat violence against women by promoting the principle of the rule of law based on women's rights and improving institutional mechanisms in the Palestinian society in order to protect and support abused women to enable them to live

in a society free from all forms of discrimination based on equality, dignity and respect for human rights. Natil (2004) argues that civil society organizations and women groups attempt to eliminate violence against Palestinian women and contribute towards an equitable, open and democratic society through raising public awareness of current issues. However, civil society organizations should make a concerted effort to face challenges by cooperating with the local authorities to promote education for development.

There has been significant progress in establishing international standards and norms, particularly the UN Designated International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women On November 25, 1960; the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which was adopted in 2000, calls for equal participation by women in peace and security issues (UNDPI, 2008). It is evident that more effort is needed to strengthen the mechanisms to prevent, prosecute and remedy violence against women in times of war, and to ensure that their voices are heard in building peace.

3. Purpose and scope

Much research has been conducted to understand the phenomenon of violence against women and its impact all over the world. However, it is difficult to gauge the prevalence of violence against women in the Palestinian society. Due to the notion of being stigmatized in the Arabic culture, much of the inflicted violence in the home, on wives, sisters and mothers is concealed. To date, there is no official documentation or data which reveals the number of cases where violent acts have been committed against women. The only cases which have been documented are those which were recorded through studies conducted by neutral organizations or individuals who work with victims of violence.

The main objective of this study is to provide updated data regarding the phenomenon of violence against women in the Palestinian society; its prevalence; causes; forms and coping strategies used by battered women to combat the violence at Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate. Group differences were examined to highlight factors which contribute towards violence against women. The study sheds light on a sensitive topic in the Palestinian society. It's a pattern of behavior that violates the rights of women, limits their participation in society and damages their health and well-being.

A common understanding of the causes of violence can help communities and local institutions develop effective responses thereto. Such an understanding helps avoid conflicting responses that could undermine efforts to protect victims and hold batterers accountable. The study will present selected recommendations and suggestions to the policy-makers to eliminate violence against Palestinian women. Furthermore, the study was conducted during many political events in the Middle East which continue to expose male domination, exposure and the exclusion and abuse of Palestinian women.

4. Definition of Terms

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (The International Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1993).

Women refer to married females regardless of their social, legal status, race, religion, class or any other factors.

4.1. Limitations

The population of this study was limited to married women at Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate in the West Bank, Palestine during 2014.

4.2. Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature and on the proposed conceptualization of violence against women, the set objectives and variables of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- There are no statistical significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the prevalence of violence against Palestinian women according to kind of marriage, type of marriage, qualifications and work status.
- There are no statistical significant correlations at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ between age at the time of marriage, couples age differences, duration of marriage, number of children and the prevalence of violence against Palestinian women.

Delimiting variables to the scope of the study based on the participants' demographic characteristic includes age at time of marriage, couples age differences, duration of marriage, kind and type of marriage, qualifications, number of children, work status, in addition to the violence against women index

5. Methodology and Design

This study is quantitative in nature. A questionnaire was utilized to assess violence against Palestinian women in order to identify such phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation, using convenient research instruments.

The overall sample which comprised three hundred and sixty-three married women was selected randomly. The sample size was calculated using the sampling web <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, and sample size calculator with a margin error of

0.05. The target population consisted of married women at Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate, in the West Bank during 2014, which included 6642 women out of 42320 citizens (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

5.1. Instrumentation

Violence against women was evaluated using an index of a 60-item scale divided into four sub-scales: prevalence, causes, forms and coping strategies used by battered women to combat violence. The index was developed by the researcher. A 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree and strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses. The respondents in Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate were requested to complete the questionnaire as well as participate in face to face interviews. The interview was conducted with married women in the household. The sampling survey instrument sought socio-economic background information such as the participants' age at the time of marriage, couples age differences, duration of marriage, kind and type of marriage, qualifications, number of children and work status.

The instrument was validated in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators who provided specific comments on the tool. The second phase involved the implementation of a pilot study (N=40) to validate the survey through an exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.60 (0.62 to 0.91), which implied that those items were suitable to measure every item of violence against Palestinian women.

Reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half coefficients to ascertain the consistency of the survey. Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half instrument was 0.94 and 0.92, respectively, which indicated excellent reliability and consistency.

The demographic breakdown of the participants was as follows: age at time of marriage, couples age differences, duration of marriage, kind and type of marriage, qualifications, number of children and work status. A total of three hundred and sixty-three interviews were undertaken. The respondents were aged between 15 and 78 (M=34.91 SD 11.18). The mean age of married participants was 20.56, with a range of 13 to 30 (SD 4.41). Almost 59.5% of the participants were married for more than eight years and had an average of 5.59 children with a range of 1 to 13 (SD 2.75). Traditionally married women represented 73.6%; the majority (79.3%) has an internal marriage as well; the couples age difference was 6.24 with a range of 1 to 30 (SD 5.05). The majority (76.9%) of the participants had a basic level of education while only 26.7% were employed at the time of the interview.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire items were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither,

4=agree and 5=strongly agree); the highest score indicated a high prevalence of violence against women. Descriptive statistics gauged the rate of violence among the sampled population. The following statistical techniques were measured: Regression, T.test, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test, Cronbach's Alpha, Guttman Split-Half Coefficient and Factor Analysis.

In terms of the results, the mean score of violence reported by the sample (three hundred and sixty-three participants) was high (M 3.72 SD 0.47). The total score showed that almost (74.4%) of the women had experienced violence; related to the Palestinian society and its patriarchal culture (M 3.98 SD 0.40), to the husband (M 3.70 SD 0.62), and to the wives themselves (M 3.47 SD 0.36).

Furthermore, the findings revealed the main causes of violence that related to the Palestinian society and its culture were ranked in descending order as follows: male dominated culture and tradition in Palestinian society (M 4.42 SD 0.49); a lover beating is like eating sultana (M 4.28 SD 0.44); the look down upon women in Palestinian society (M 4.24 SD 0.42); the high cost of living (M 4.06 SD 0.92); and the high rate of the unemployment (M 4.02 SD 0.95). As for violence, the causes related to the husband were as follows: husband nervousness (M 4.22 SD 0.79); husband and wife's family interference in marital affairs (M 4.01 SD 0.80); the inability of a husband to spend on the family (M 3.89 SD 0.78); the disagreement on raising children with the wife (M 3.28 SD 0.82); and husband jealousy of his wife (M 3.11 SD 0.69). In terms of violence the causes related to the wives themselves. They accused the husband of impotency, lack of manhood (M 3.98 SD 0.62); constantly reminding the man of his weak points (M 3.76 SD 0.53); women criticize their husbands in front of others (M 3.71 SD 0.62); married infidelity (M 3.69 SD 0.56); and male infertility (M 3.68 SD 0.56).

Moreover, the findings revealed that 72.6% of the women surveyed were exposed to different types of violence: mostly physical (M 3.90 SD 0.72); psychological (M 3.86 SD 0.84); and sexual (M 3.22 SD 0.78). The main forms of violence from an intimate partner included pulling hair (M 4.60 SD 0.72); strike using the hand (M 4.56 SD 0.68); threaten wife of divorce (M 4.28 SD 0.71); spiting in the face (M 4.10 SD 0.53); and banish the wife from the home (M 4.08 SD 0.63).

The results also revealed that battered women used different coping strategies to combat violence in the Palestinian society. They would surrender to the status quo (M 4.78 SD 0.73); ask their parents for a helping hand (M 4.68 SD 0.78); request help from relatives (M 4.66 SD 0.65); request help from neighbors (M 4.50 SD 0.72); and ask friends to help (M 4.46 SD 0.68).

Furthermore, the study investigated demographic breakdown of violence against women with the aim of identifying differences. The findings revealed that type and duration of marriage do not indicate any significant differences. However, it was found that age at the time of marriage, couples age differences, kind of marriage, qualifications, number of children, and work status are significant variables. In terms of kind of marriage the differences were in favor of traditional way of marriage (M 4.04 SD 0.39) compared to (M 3.60 SD 0.45) for non-traditional marriage: T.test value was (-8414 P=0000). As for work status, the differences were in favor of unemployed women (M 3.76 SD 0.49)

compared to (M 3.61 SD 0.42) for working women: T-test value was (-2791 P=0006). In relation to qualifications, the differences were in favor of less-educated women (M 3.80 SD 0.52) compared to well-educated women (M 3.49 SD 0.35): F-value was (6590 P=0000).

Finally, the findings indicated that there are statistical significant negative correlations between age at time of marriage and the prevalence of violence against women: Beta-value was (-0239 P=0000). However, the findings showed a statistical significant positive correlation between couples age differences, number of children, and the prevalence of violence against women in the Palestinian society: Beta-value was (0124 P=0010) and (0266 P=0000), respectively.

7. Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that violence against women in the Palestinian society is a risk factor for intimate partner violence. The study recorded high levels of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. The women have experienced physical, psychological and sexual violence by their husbands related mostly to the Palestinian society and its culture. The low rate of sexual violence is attributed to women not talking about such a sensitive issue, since it is considered taboo in a male-oriented culture of denial in general and in a conservative Bedouin community at Jericho & Al-Aghwar in particular.

The above findings are considered normal in the Arab Palestinian society which has conservative customs and traditions, male patriarchal dominance and social upbringing which is based on gender inequality. Patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted in the Palestinian society in general and in a Bedouin, tribal society at Jericho & Al-Aghwar in particular, where the notions of father and brother are prevalent. According to these notions, male dominance supports the structure that keeps men in positions of power, authority and control (Banat, 2014).

As a result of the escalation of violence against women in all societies in general and the Palestinian society in particular, (mainly in Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate), several formal figures, community based organizations, civil societies and women organizations signed a document fighting violence against women on 27 March 2014. In this document, a formal commitment to end violence against women was requested by civil society organizations, with the objective of dismantling the misogynist culture that threatens women rights (Palestinian News & Information Agency-WAFA, 27/3/2014).

Moreover, the findings showed that it's difficult for a victimized woman to seek redress or help with any guarantee of privacy. Consequently, according to given traditions of male authority and the enclosed nature of Palestinian communities, under-reporting of offences is widespread. Palestinian women and girls who report abuse to the authorities usually find themselves confronted by a system that prioritizes the reputation of their families in the community over their own well-being and lives. Women find it difficult to report abuse because there is no legal framework in place to protect them. Furthermore,

the «honor» of their families is considered more important than the crimes committed against them.

The findings also revealed an increased level of violence against women of arranged marriage (without a prior acquaintance or involvement in pre-marital intimate relations). Marriage is considered a social system in all human societies since it is a means to fulfill instinctive, psychological and social satisfaction. It is the first step to building a family by which the individual crosses from an individual life to a new life filled with cooperation, partnership compliance through rights and obligations together with his wife in their new life. It is a bilateral relationship where the most profound manifestations of interaction and human contact are exhibited.

The family or the clan to which the individual belongs is responsible for shaping his views about marriage and the way to choose his future partner. Perhaps this is salient in traditional societies including the Arab Palestinian community. The family preserves the right to make the final decisions in choosing the future partner for each of its members. This is called traditional internal marriage (Al Khuly, 1983). Arranged marriages neither provide sufficient opportunity for the couple to learn to know each other well nor to choose the right partner intellectually, socially and emotionally compared with the norms of unconventional marriage which allows for a larger space of acquaintance between the couple and a better choice based on intellectual agreement and understanding of the other along with a discussion of family problems which might take place between the couple in the future. This would reflect positively on harmony in marriage leading to a drop in the level of violence against women in their families.

Moreover, the findings showed that employed women reported a lower level of violence compared with unemployed participants. This confirmed sociologist Karl Marx's (1844) social theory the significance of the economic aspect in the social structure and its role in controlling all aspects of society (Banat, 2012). Despite the limited participation of Palestinian women in the labor market compared with men in the Palestinian society in general and Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate in particular, a woman's work gives her a kind of economic independence and social status, especially when she shares a man in covering family expenses under harsh living conditions in the Palestinian society in general and in Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate in particular as a result of the high rate of unemployment and poverty under the on-going Israeli occupation. This would positively reflect on the man's view of women as real partners in building, developing and preserving the family. This could reduce violence against them.

The prevalence of violence increased among less-educated women. Education is a significant stage in the formation and development of one's personality; it represents a critical turning point in the life of a woman, which fulfills their aspirations, meet their abilities, preferences and interests. Education also, fulfills social interaction that contributes to the development of the personality of women, reinforces her abilities in learning and thinking, make decisions and takes responsibility for her actions (Banat & Rimawi, 2014). By the same token, Firjani (1998: 3) points out that the benefits of the essential role played by higher education in the development of backward societies, are much

higher than the anticipated economic calculations taking into consideration that higher education plays a substantial role in the formation of a higher level of human capital in society. Institutions of higher learning lay the foundation for the cognitive revolution of knowledge and sophisticated abilities namely: higher levels of human capital which is the main mainstay for progress in this century. Moreover, education enhances: marital satisfaction, couples communication skills; discuss their problems/sources of conflict, and their reasoning ability and ability to logically arrive at solutions to conflict (Jamabo & Ordu, 2012). Furthermore, Behzad *et al.* (2013) argued that educated women are more aware of their rights and also have better communication skills than their husbands.

All of the above issues are fundamental components in formulating coping strategies to combat violence against women in the Palestinian society. It is true that educated women have acquired, to a large extent, some qualities and characteristics to challenge and ward off any forms of violence against them. However, such awareness and rejection has not eliminated domestic violence against them taking into consideration the composition of the Palestinian patriarchal society.

The study revealed no differences in the prevalence of violence against women in the Palestinian society according to their type and duration of marriage. This indicated that violence against women is not influenced by these variables and are more likely to be affected by other factors other than type and duration of marriage.

The results also indicated that violence increased among women who married extremely young. Arab countries have yet to adopt laws prohibiting child marriage before the age of eighteen. Yet studies indicate that those who marry young and teenage pregnancies threaten the health of both the mother and the child and increases women vulnerability to violence. Marriages at a young age often lead to divorce, family breakdown and poor child-rearing. Arab countries commonly encourage early child birth and high fertility, which carry marked health risks for very young mothers and their infants. Although early marriage is on the decline in the Arab countries, the number of teenage girls who are married remains significant in some countries (Arab Human Development Report, 2009). This is reflected in the woman's inability to fulfill her marital roles and duties at a young age which would result in the high rate of violence practiced against them.

Furthermore, an inverse relationship was found between the rate of violence against women and the couple's age differences. Undoubtedly, when couples belong to two different generations, their thoughts and interests differ. Therefore, the conflict of generations is manifested to the highest level of violence against women.

Finally, an inverse correlation was observed between the rate of violence against women and the number of children. Undoubtedly, with increased number of children, the couples deal with different problems including economic issues under the difficult living conditions prevalent in the Palestinian society and new challenges. This would unsettle the stability of the family and increase the scope of violence against women. The findings of this study are similar to the several findings in the related studies as well as vice versa.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Palestinian women, like many other females in the regions, sustain both direct and indirect violence. Violence against women is severe and grounded in widespread traditional social norms and gender inequalities in the Palestinian patriarchal society. According to the WHO (2013), violence against women is a public health problem of epidemic proportions. It pervades all corners of the globe, puts women's health at risk, limits their participation in society and causes great human suffering. The phenomenon of violence against women is a severe human rights violation and precludes women from playing a central role in society. In addition, the difficult socio-economic conditions, as a result of Israel's on-going occupation, have contributed to increasing levels of violence against Palestinian women in the private sphere (Al-HAQ, 2013). Much needs to be done in curtailing violence against women in terms of women needs and reality in a Bedouin tribal society at Jericho & Al-Aghwar governate which has conservative customs and traditions, male patriarchal dominance and social upbringing based on gender inequality. In light of the on-going violence against the Palestinian women, the following recommendations are made which could end their daily suffering:

- Provide legal protection for women and fight violence against them.
- Reinforce a secure social culture in fighting all forms of violence against women through enforcing it in the school curriculum.
- Reinforce the role of religious discourse and direct it towards violence against women.
- Reinforce the culture of dialogue and respect of the other in the Palestinian family through an enhancement of the concept of social roles from a gender perspective.
- Empowering women in the Palestinian society is an essential component for preventing violence against them.
- There is a clear need to scale up community efforts across a range of sectors in order to combat violence against women and to provide necessary protective services for battered women.
- Further research is essential to expand the understanding of violence against women and its measurable impact on personal aspects of the life of women using the case study and qualitative research design.

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SOBRE EL AUTOR • ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat PhD. Sociology (Statistical Methods and Research Techniques), Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Al-Quds University, Main Campus, Jerusalem-Abu Dies, Palestine.