
Session 2: Gender and Families



Rajnaara Akhtar

Title: Women’s Experiences of Family Law and Family Justice Processes in Qatar – Findings of an Empirical Study

Abstract:

This paper will provide an overview of the findings of a DIFI funded study, titled An Empirical Study of Women’s Marriage and Divorce Experiences in Qatar, in which 40 women participants were engaged in semi-structured interviews using grounded theory methodology. The key research questions were: (1) what are women’s experiences of marriage and divorce in Qatar; (2) what the relevant legal processes involved in the formation and dissolution of the family were and how easy it was for women to access and use them; (3) how Qatar’s family law regime constructs the rights and responsibilities of men and women in the family, and the positive and negative outcomes of this; and (4) how women’s individual experiences are shaped by the law, institutional processes associated with family law, social expectations, cultural norms, religious discourses and other factors. The project sought to capture the experiences of both Qatari women and resident non-Qatari women. The paper will present a range of findings from the study including family justice processes and women’s access to the courts; women’s experiences of the enforcement of court decisions; the role of Wifaq in families and the impact and experiences of engaging with the services provided; and the visa insecurity faced by some residents due to family conflict. A detailed project report will be published by DIFI which will complement the presentation.

Bio:

Rajnaara is a socio-legal scholar with a focus on family law. Her research interests include marriage formalities and legal treatment of non-legally binding religious-only marriages. Her research into such marriages looks at transitional relationship norms, normative influences, legal consequences and autonomy. She has conducted extensive empirical fieldwork in this area in the UK, Qatar and Australia. Her work draws on a range of socio-legal theories and approaches. She has recently completed an empirical research project funded by the Doha International Family Institute exploring the experiences of women in Qatar with the law and legal infrastructure relating to marriage and divorce.
