



THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATING MANDATORY REHABILITATION OF MEN WHO HAVE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LEBANON





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**KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation
Research Clinic S.A.R.L**

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**The importance of legislating mandatory rehabilitation of
men who have perpetrated domestic violence in Lebanon ©2023**

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KAFa (Enough Violence & Exploitation) is a feminist, secular, Lebanese, non-profit, non-governmental civil society organization seeking to create a society that is free of social, economic and legal patriarchal structures that discriminate against women.

KAFa aims to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and exploitation since its establishment in 2005. It seeks to realize substantive gender equality through the adoption of different approaches, such as:

Advocacy for law reform and introduction of new laws and policies; influencing public opinion, practices and mentality; conducting research and training; and empowering women and children victims of violence, and providing them with social, legal, and psychological support.

Our focus areas are:

- 1) Family violence;
- 2) Exploitation and trafficking in women, especially in migrant domestic workers and women in prostitution;
- 3) Child protection, particularly from sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in Lebanon, yet there are no official statistics on its incidence and prevalence. However, numerous local and international organizations, as well as academic studies, have documented the phenomenon of GBV in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant surge in GBV cases, resulting in a shadow pandemic throughout Lebanon. Additionally, the economic crisis has also led to an increase in the frequency and intensity of violence against women and girls. As a result, preventing and addressing GBV has become an urgent priority in Lebanon, requiring immediate attention.

B. STUDY AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

This research study aimed to explore the adverse effects of

patriarchal beliefs and patriarchal masculine identity on men's overall wellbeing, as well as their influence on the development of the male perpetrator's identity. Additionally, it sought to examine the significance of requiring male perpetrators to undergo rehabilitation and legalizing the process. This study utilized a qualitative research design and employed four primary methods for data collection: a literature review, two case studies of male perpetrators who underwent «Choice, A Program for Men,» six focus group discussions with both men and women, and twelve in-depth interviews with key informants, including senior psychologists, legal advisors, judges, experts on domestic violence cases, and male perpetrator's workers.

C. PATRIARCHY WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE LEBANESE CONTEXT

1. Definition of Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy refers to a social system where men hold power and dominance over women in different spheres of society, including politics, economics, religion, law, and family. Patriarchy is perpetuated through the process of early male socialization, which involves learning and internalizing social values, norms, and expectations associated with masculinity and male gender roles. This process is reinforced by various socializing agents, such as parents, peers, media, and society, who encourage aggressive and dominant behavior while discouraging emotional expressiveness and vulnerability. In Lebanon, patriarchal culture marginalizes women, and gender inequality is deeply ingrained in state and personal status laws that govern marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, which reinforce male dominance in society.

2. Definition of Patriarchal Masculine Identity

Patriarchal masculine identity refers to a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that are associated with being male in a given society, which includes physical strength, emotional stoicism, assertiveness, competitiveness, and the downplaying of vulnerability, emotionality, and empathy. This study reveals that patriarchal masculine identity in Lebanon is manifested in beliefs and behaviors that emphasize preserving family's honor, being the sole financial provider, dominance and entitlement, emotional restraint and aggression, physical strength and being the sole protector, masculine sexual expectations, and men's reluctance to express needs and seek help. The patriarchal masculine identity dismisses traits associated with femininity and regards them as weak, but these traits are actually humanistic and essential for good psychological well-being and healthy

relationships. Similarly, there are positive traits associated with masculinity, such as self-reliance and being a provider, but when taken to an extreme, these traits can be harmful. For example, over-emphasizing on self-reliance can lead to emotional disconnection and reluctance to seek help, being the sole protector can lead to control and violence, and being the sole provider can lead to stress and lack of involvement in family life. As such, it is important to recognize the value and importance of all humanistic traits, regardless of whether they are traditionally associated with masculinity or femininity, and to work towards a more inclusive and equitable understanding of what it means to be a healthy individual.

3. Impacts of Patriarchal Beliefs and Patriarchal Masculine Identity on Men's Wellbeing

The patriarchal beliefs and patriarchal

masculine identity impose a rigid prototype of masculinity upon men, demanding dominance, aggression, and impulsivity. Men who do not conform to this prototype, such as those with different sexual orientations or those who prioritize nurturing, understanding, and love over dominance and aggression, are marginalized and socially ostracized. Even men who conform to this patriarchal masculine identity are burdened by its narrow constraints, such as the burden of being the sole financial provider. In essence, patriarchy has detrimental impacts on men's general health, psychological wellbeing, and suicide rates. Conformity to the patriarchal masculine identity leads to dangerous health behaviors, influences men's medical seeking behavior, and is correlated with lower emotional intelligence, poor mental health outcomes, and decreased mental health service seeking behaviors. Moreover, unrealistic financial



responsibilities, emotional expression restraint, social ostracism, and reluctance to seek help contribute to heightened levels of suicide in men, particularly in the context of the economic crisis in Lebanon.

4. Patriarchy is Being Contested and Challenged in Lebanon

Women's rights organizations and activists in Lebanon have been working to challenge and dismantle patriarchy through advocacy, activism, and legal reforms. Despite some progress, patriarchy is still deeply ingrained in traditional family dynamics, socio-cultural norms, state laws, and personal status laws. Gender-based violence, discrimination, and obstacles to women's advancement still persist. The study found that men hold diverse attitudes towards masculinity and gender equality, with some being strongly patriarchal, other holding contradictory beliefs, and some being completely egalitarian. The gradual

dismantling of patriarchy has resulted in cognitive dissonance and doubt in men who strongly identify with patriarchal masculinity and those who hold conflicting beliefs regarding gender equality. For instance, some men who strongly conform to patriarchal beliefs, staunchly defended patriarchy, despite acknowledging that it placed unrealistic expectations on them and stifled their emotional expression. Other men who held contradictory beliefs regarding gender equality also displayed evidence of cognitive dissonance; some of them opposed feminism and held onto patriarchal masculine identities, yet they paradoxically showed support for certain aspects of gender equality and women's rights. These men viewed feminism as a threat to men's identities and believed that it corrupted women, yet they acknowledged that violence against women was never justified. In the same context, some other men, who held contradictory beliefs, expressed



anger towards our discussions on the abuse committed by men, claiming that men were also victims of abuse by their wives and needed protection. These men believed that many reported stories of abuse were fabricated by women to falsely accuse innocent men. Paradoxically, they also believed that perpetrating violence against women could be justified in certain cases. However, other men in this study, who were completely egalitarian, believed that all forms of abuse should be completely prohibited and that violence is never justified, even in cases of sexual infidelity or if the wife didn't conform to her gender role as wife/mother.

D. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FORMATION OF MALE PERPETRATOR'S IDENTITY

Patriarchy is the root cause of the formation of male perpetrators»

identity, placing men in dominant positions of control over women while also creating unrealistic expectations and burdens for men, such as being the sole provider and protector of the family. Conforming to patriarchal masculine identity can exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and humiliation in men, particularly when their authority is challenged or they cannot meet societal expectations. Moreover, patriarchy prevents men from handling vulnerability when experiencing humiliation, causing them to displace these emotions into anger, which is considered powerful in patriarchal masculine identity. In addition, patriarchal beliefs legitimize violence as a means of «discipline», which can lead men to express their anger through violent behavior. The normalization of abuse can result from childhood experiences of witnessing or experiencing abusive behavior and being exposed to gender policing that reinforces violent behavior. Other factors that may contribute to the

formation of a male perpetrator's identity include the presence of a severe psychological disorder and anger displacement.

E. "CHOICE, A PROGRAM FOR MEN": A REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR MALE PERPETRATORS IN LEBANON

«Choice, A Program for Men,» founded by KAFA in 2019, is a rehabilitation program for male perpetrators of gender-based violence in Lebanon. The program comprises four essential components: assessment, intervention, clinical supervision, and progress reports. The intervention toolkit comprises one-to-one behavior change work, tailored to each client's specific needs, and typically consists of 24 to 52 sessions that use various techniques such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, psychodynamic therapy, anger management, mindfulness, and

didactic teaching. The program also aims to change men's patriarchal masculine beliefs and attitudes, which are considered the root cause of gender-based violence. Moreover, it recognizes the significance of providing ongoing supervision, support, and guidance to the workers who engage with male perpetrators on a weekly basis.

This study presents two case studies (Adel and Badr) of male perpetrators who have successfully completed «Choice, A Program for Men». These case studies illustrate the effectiveness of «Choice, A Program for Men» as a valuable resource for male perpetrators seeking to address domestic violence and cultivate healthy relationships. They demonstrated how this program can be a useful rehabilitation program for male perpetrators in Lebanon. The success of Adel and Badr's cases shows how the program can positively impact individuals who



have engaged in abusive behavior towards their partners or family members. The program is tailored to assist men in comprehending the underlying reasons for their abusive behavior, while also teaching them healthy approaches to manage their emotions and relationships. The program supplies men with tools and encouragement to take responsibility for their actions and make constructive changes in their lives. The success of these two instances indicates that the program can be an advantageous resource for men who are dedicated to stopping their abusive conduct and cultivating positive relationships with their loved ones. The program's emphasis on questioning and redefining patriarchal beliefs and masculinity also helps participants develop a more comprehensive understanding of healthy relationships and promotes gender equality.

The effectiveness of rehabilitation

programs such as "Choice, A Program for Men" for male perpetrators depends on the support of the legal system and the level of patriarchy in a given society. A more egalitarian society and a legal system that mandates rehabilitation can create a more conducive environment for addressing the underlying factors that contribute to violent behavior and promote positive changes in offenders. As such, a comprehensive approach to ensuring the success of «Choice, A Program for Men» in Lebanon includes legislating the mandatory rehabilitation of male perpetrators and promoting less patriarchal society.

In Lebanon, the Law 293 provides a woman survivor, who have suffered abuse, with a protection order within 48 hours of disclosing the abuse at the Urgent Matters Civil Judge. The protection order may include measures such as prohibiting the perpetrator from committing

further violence, evicting him from the house, and requiring him to provide alimony to the survivor. A woman survivor, as mandated by the law 293, can also report the perpetrator at a police station or file a lawsuit against him. The lawsuit typically proceeds through the Public Prosecution and is ultimately heard by the Penalty Judge, who can issue a penalty verdict. This penalty verdict may involve punishment measures such as a fine or imprisonment, and/or rehabilitation of the perpetrator depending on the level of abuse. Although Law 293 provides some protection for survivors, incomplete protection for women persists, as the rehabilitation of male perpetrators is not included in the protection order and is only considered as part of the penalty verdict.

F. IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATING THE MANDATORY REHABILITATION OF MALE PERPETRATORS IN LEBANON

Legislating the mandatory rehabilitation of male perpetrators is essential as it is associated with increasing the enrollment of male perpetrators in rehabilitation programs, increasing perpetrators' accountability, limiting dropout, ensuring compliance, and reducing recidivism. Legislating the mandatory rehabilitation of male perpetrators also empower women to report abuse, which would significantly contribute to limiting domestic and gender-based violence in the Lebanese society, by breaking abusive patterns within families. Legislating mandatory rehabilitation can also reap the positive impacts of such programs on male perpetrators, women survivors,



and their children. It can also lead to preserving family bonds, based on the couple's intentions, and shifting social norms toward gender equality.

G. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes with the following key recommendations:

1. It is recommended to mandate the rehabilitation of male perpetrators of violence as part of the protection order, immediately after a survivor reports abuse. This would provide immediate protection for women and prevent further abuse, as the lengthy process of a penalty verdict can lead to further escalation of violence.
2. This study provided the following action plan for the proper legislation of the mandatory rehabilitation of male perpetrators.

Upon survivor's disclosure of abuse and reporting, it is recommended that the Urgent Matters Civil Judge mandates the rehabilitation of the male perpetrator, as part of the protection order, at «Choice, A Program for Men» for at least 10 sessions. At «Choice», the referred perpetrator will undergo a detailed psychological and risk assessment. Based on this assessment outcome, «Choice» will determine a tailored action plan for eligible male beneficiary and send a report to the judge. The assessment report will also include, the required number of sessions, which can vary from 24 to 52 depending on the individual needs of the perpetrator. In case the male beneficiary is not eligible for the program, the report will include the reasons why he cannot be taken in charge as well as specific recommendations for referrals. Based on the judge's recommendation, «Choice» can provide periodic progress reports

to the judge. "Choice" will also provide a final report upon the perpetrator's completion of the program outlining his overall progress and eventual areas of improvement. "Choice" will also report any risk of crime or severe physical or sexual abuse against family members displayed by the perpetrator.

3. It is recommended to implement a comprehensive approach to changing public opinion on patriarchal masculine stereotypes. This approach should include incorporating topics related to gender equality into civic curriculum in schools and universities. Reinforcing public awareness campaigns targeting both women and men through in-house and mass media platforms is also essential. Engaging both genders in a dialogue about patriarchal beliefs surrounding masculinity and femininity, and educating men and

women about how these beliefs contribute to gender inequality and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is crucial. Additionally, promoting parenting styles that prioritize gender equality can help break down traditional gender norms. It is also recommended to involve former male perpetrators and male activists in these campaigns to reduce social stigma, encourage men to seek help, and join rehabilitation programs.

4. It is recommended to collaborate with key stakeholders, including lawyers, judges, and police officers. It is important to equip these stakeholders with knowledge and skills covering the following topics: understanding the impact of patriarchal beliefs, challenging beliefs and stereotypes that reinforce gender inequality, and developing strategies to effectively address gender-based violence within the Lebanese laws in a



sensitive manner. Additionally, it is important to have a dedicated group of judges who are specialized in handling domestic violence cases. Finally, it is recommended to legislate a unified Civil Personal Status Law for all sects in Lebanon, to ensure the equal treatment for all Lebanese citizens with regards to personal matters such as marriage, inheritance, and child custody, regardless of their gender and religious affiliation.

