

Why Stay? Saudi Women's Adaption's to Violence

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Abstract

The study investigates the reasons why women continue to live with an abusive husband and examines the relationship between their reasons and a number of variables that support one's ability to cope with spousal violence. These variables include employment status, educational level, number of children, marriage duration, the social status of the wife's family and the number of violent incidents. A demographic survey and a spousal violence adaption scale were administered to a sample of 114 abused wives. The results revealed that all of the variables and several of the dimensions represented by the violence adaption scale affected the women's decisions. The impact of these variables was more obvious among nonworking wives and the lesser educated, women with a greater number of children, those who had been married longer, those who senatal families had a low social status, and those who were subjected to violence more frequently.

Keywords: adaptation to violence, marital violence, Saudi Arabia, spousal violence, violence against women in Saudi Arabia, why women stay in violent relationships.

For many decades, violence against women, in particular, and family violence, in general, was considered taboo subjects that should not be discussed in public. Local Saudi newspapers recently began publishing photos and news about domestic violence victims, first about children and then about women. However, despite the reasonable number of studies that have been conducted on family violence both locally and in the Arab world, more data are needed to understand why women remain with violent husbands and when or how women cope with violence. Local studies on family violence have generally focused on violence against women, especially married women. The topic of violence against children and violence against unmarried women has yet to be explored. Local researchers have arguably been influenced by feminist academic concerns about the unequal status of women and their subordinate position to men both inside and outside of the family. Furthermore, gathering information from children about their experiences with abuse is challenging both because of the difficulty of gaining access to these children and because the children feel an obligation to protect their families and to avoid violating the sanctity and privacy of their homes. The myth of family bliss, harmony and security promotes the belief that a beating from a member of the family is less serious, less painful or less harmful than one from a stranger (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles, 1985).

The current study intends to take the investigation of violence against women in Saudi Arabia to a new level by focusing on the reasons that compel women to cope with the abuse rather than why women are abused or the types or severity of abuse that they experience. The study assesses the relationship of six variables with women's decision to remain in their marriage. These variables are the woman's occupational status, education level, and number of children, years of marriage, natal family's social status and frequency of violent incidents.

Patriarchy and violence against women

Gelles (1985) identified eight approaches that have been developed to explain family violence, as follows: resource theory, general systems theory, the ecological model, the exchange model, the patriarchy explanation, the socio biological perspective, the economic model and the socio cultural perspective. Violence against women, however, cannot be explained by a single approach, and one explanation cannot account for all of the abuse experienced by women of different classes, cultures, ages and marriage circumstances, including marriage duration, number of children and living arrangements.

The classic view asserts that the family's patriarchal structure hinders the study of violence against woman (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hamdawi, 2000; Tracy, 2007) because those who have power (men) are best positioned to defend it. Therefore, the feminist literature has predominantly focused on the analysis of patriarchy. Violence against women (Walby, 1989) has all of the characteristics of a socially structured phenomenon and cannot be understood without reference to patriarchal social structures. Older males are the most powerful members of patriarchal society because patriarchy privileges males and elders (including elder women). Therefore, all adult males are superior to younger males and women.

Females (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001) are taught to respect and defer to their fathers, brothers, grandparents and uncles. Young people are taught to respect and defer to their older relatives. In turn, males are taught to take responsibility for their female relatives, and elders are taught to protect and take responsibility for those younger than themselves. Generally, the privileges that are associated with gender and age, as argued by Joseph (1996) and Joseph and Slyomovics (2001), enhance the power and authority of older males. If their power and authority are threatened, the male elders have the right to control and punish disobedience or any attempt to rebel against or challenge their authority.

Parental authority has two elements, structural and ideological. As Dobash and Dobash(1979) indicated, the parental structural system is pyramidal and originated in social institutions and social relationships that subjected individuals and groups to centers of power, privilege and leadership or other forms of power. In addition, women lack legal means to change or manage the institutions that force them into subordinate positions. Many people accept the continuation of such a pyramidal system and the domination of the few over the many, supporting the ideological basis of parenthood. As a result, any deviation from the pyramidal system is confronted with many external restrictions and social pressures that punish the disobedient. Women represent a segment of society that has been completely removed from power and influence to hinder them from threatening the parental system. Once married (Dobash & Dobash, 1979), the man and the woman conform to the behaviors that are expected of a husband and wife. The husband exercises power over his wife, who becomes less involved in controlling her own affairs and therefore more isolated from the outside world and subservient to her husband's wishes and desires. Dobash and Dobash(1979) suggested that such circumstances perpetuate violence against women. In other words, a husband's use of physical violence against his wife is an expression of the unequal status, authority and power of the marital partners.

The notions that patriarchy is the ultimate cause of all abuse against women was established by the early modern feminist movement (Tracy, 2007). Feminists argue that in a patriarchal society, those who hold power, i.e., males, resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened. Domestic violence, therefore, is a consequence of patriarchy and part of a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance in the home and in society. Islamic shari'a institutionalizes male dominance through its structuring of husband-wife roles within the family. Women are considered to be responsible for domestic work, child care and emotional and psychological support. Men, as the providers, are considered to have greater status and greater responsibility for the decisions that are made in the family. The family is the core unit of Muslim society, and Saudi society has historically favored the stability of the family over the safety of its members. Therefore, family violence has become a testing ground for initiating changes in society's formal institutions, including the courts, the police, social services, hospitals, schools and laws and regulations that prioritize individuals' well-being over the family as a unit. Hajjar (2004) argued that the state's willingness and capacity to reform criminal and family law will determine whether domestic violence will ever be prohibited and punished. However, the possibility of state-sponsored reforms is endangered by social beliefs and ideologies about gender and family relations.

The current study does not suggest that spousal abuse is similar to or commensurate with child abuse, elder abuse or sibling abuse. Rather, we view husbands' violence against their wives as a method of exerting control over female marriage partners and believe that battered wives share common experiences of marital rape, sexual harassment and rape.

Naved and Persson (2005) explored the factors that are associated with physical violence against women within marriage and categorized these factors into the following three groups: individual factors, relational factors and factors related to the immediate family context. The individual factor that is most relevant to Saudi culture, especially among low-income families (in which polygamy has resulted in a large number of children), is the wife's age.

Girls commonly marry at an early age in Saudi Arabia, especially girls who did not complete or receive any education beyond high school. Other individual factors include family education level, past experience of familial violence and wife's personal income or economic dependence.

Relational factors include factors that are related to marital conflict or discord in the relationship. The factors that are associated with the immediate family context include family structure, male dominance and control, the family support network and socioeconomic status. However, the physical abuse of wives occurs in all social and demographic groups. Nevertheless, Naved and Persson (2005) asserted that cultural norms and values, especially gender inequality and the society's tolerance for violence, are significant factors in domestic violence.

Socioeconomic factors such as family income, the husband's employment status and the wife's economic dependence have been identified in many studies as causing or fostering tolerance of violence against women (Adams and Hickson, 1993; Dobash & Dobash 1979; Lupri, Eugen, Grandin & Brinkerhoff 1994; Naved & Persson 2005; Smith 1990). The wife's economic dependence especially places her in a vulnerable position, and it is this vulnerability that allows men to use violence to express their dissatisfaction. Such economic dependence is not a woman's choice; rather, it is a reality that is created by the limited employment opportunities and high unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia.

O'Brien's (1971) study on violence among families involved in divorce proceedings found a correlation between violent behavior and the husband's work underachievement/breadwinner role. O'Brien concluded that the husband's use of physical force may express his desire to reaffirm his superior gender status vis-à-vis the other family members. Goode's (1971) "resource theory" further confirmed that individuals rely on force when they lack other types of resources or when other resources have failed to help them achieve their desired ends. The studies that have found a relationship between women's economic dependency and wife abuse do not argue that the wife's economic dependency is the direct cause of the abuse. Rather, as argued by Kalmuss and Straus (1982), these studies suggest that women's economic dependence allows them few viable alternatives to marriage, which forces them to be more tolerant of negative treatment, i.e., physical abuse, from their husbands. Having children and relying on a husband for financial support adds to a wife's dependence on her husband and, consequently, traps women in abusive relationships. These factors also limit the wife's ability to leave the marriage or negotiate changes in the husband's behavior. Married women who do not work and have no potential for economic self-sufficiency is objectively dependent on their husbands, even if they are not aware of that dependency (Kalmuss & Straus 1982).

Use of force by husbands in non-Western societies, especially Middle Eastern societies, has been studied by many scholars, including Almosaed (2004, 2009), Eldoseri, Tufts, Zhang, and Fish (2014), Haj-Yahia(2000), and Yount(2005), whose work references other factors such as type of marriage, whether the couple lives with in-laws and number of children. Nevertheless, economic dependence appears to be a worldwide factor in wife abuse, and the likelihood of physical abuse is typically substantially higher among women who are economically dependent on their husbands than among women who are economically independent (Yount, 2005). Income and the family's economic situation have also been associated with violence discontinuation. Frias and Angel (2007) studied which factors predicted whether a woman had ever experienced abuse. They also determined which factors were associated with the initiation, resumption, and discontinuation of violence. The results showed that women who experienced the discontinuation of violence were older, had experienced less severe violence and reported less financial strain than women for whom violence continued. The latter women were younger; less educated and had weaker social networks.

Most Arabic studies on violence against women, however, focus on the type and nature of the violence, the extent and severity of the abuse and attitudes toward family violence. The factors and reasons that cause abused women to stay with the abuser and maintain the relationship have not been thoroughly explored and investigated. In Arabic culture, the family is a private sphere, and family problems should therefore remain within the family. Regardless of the conservative and traditional beliefs in a husband's right to use physical violence against his wife, most Saudi women, including those who stay in abusive relationships, do not accept that right except in the case of the wife's infidelity (Eldoseri et al., 2014).

Staying in or leaving a marriage

Research (such as the present study) that asks, "Why stay?" assumes that the common sense reaction of women or others in an abusive relationship is to leave.

However, the marriage relationship cannot be terminated without serious consequences to most women, especially unemployed women, women with children and women who would receive little sympathy from society and formal agencies such as the police, the courts and social services. Such is the case for abused Saudi women. The unanticipated, unexpected act of remaining in an abusive marriage requires explanation. In Loseke and Cahill's (1984) words, once a study identifies a woman as abused, normative expectations regarding marital stability are reversed. Marital stability is normatively defined as "staying", and marital instability, as manifested by the act of "leaving", is typically considered as requiring investigation. Once a wife is abused, it is marital stability that demands an explanation. Researchers assume that leaving an abusive relationship is to be expected and logical and that staying is self-destructive and deviant. Women who remain in marriages that involve violence, physical abuse or psychological abuse or those who leave but then return to the marriage are typically blamed for accepting such a situation.

Not all abused women engage in the leaving process because leaving is not always an option or a choice for abused women, as many studies have shown. Studies by Anderson (2003, 2007), Dobash and Dobash (1979, 1981), Gelles (1976, 1985), Herbert, Silver, and Ellard (1991), Kalmus and Straus (1982), Kurz (1989) Loseke and Cahill (1984), and Strube and Barbour (1983), have found correlations between the decision to stay and personal, social and material factors, including economic dependence, marriage duration, psychological commitment and self-blame, children, violence severity, childhood experiences with violence and family and formal support. Furthermore, abused women who decide to leave a marriage face many difficult issues, including housing, employment, child care, children's emotional reactions to the separation, a possible lack of social support and the difficulties of life as a single parent (Tutty, 1993).

Education, skill and employment levels are the main factors that result in wives' economic dependence on their husband. Access to a job provides women with an alternative to an abusive marriage. However, a low education level and a lack of professional skills limit women's options and, consequently, maximize their tolerance of abuse. Moreover, women's economic dependence is associated not only with staying in an abusive marriage but also with the severity of the physical abuse. Kalmus and Straus (1982) suggested that wives who are highly dependent are less able to discourage, avoid or end abuse than women in marriages in which the balance of resources between the husband and the wife is more equal. The shortage of alternatives and resources reinforces women's tolerance of physical abuse from their husbands. Kalmus and Straus (1982) further suggested that reducing economic dependence only affects the level of violence toward wives. High economic dependence, however, determines both the continuity of the marriage and the level of violence.

Dobash and Dobash (1979) argued that patterns of staying, leaving, and returning are not simply personal matters; financial support, accommodation and child care are all part of such decisions. They suggested that for a woman to leave her home, even temporarily, she must have money and a place to stay. To leave permanently, she must have sufficient funds to support herself and her children. Accommodation and expenses are typically factors over which the woman has little or no control. Women's and children's basic needs are a major consideration for abused women. In fact, even if a woman plans her marriage termination in advance, the difficulties of obtaining and paying for accommodation are considerable. The only resource that is available to unemployed Saudi women is the financial allowance that is provided by social security, which they can only obtain if they are divorced and if their family supports their decision to leave their marriage.

The custody of children is not always granted to women in Saudi society, even if they were abused in their marriage. Yount (2005) observed abused married women in Egypt and concluded that although having children enhances a woman's social identity, the laws governing divorce in Egypt ultimately grant child custody to the husband. Thus, a woman's need to remain in a marriage to retain custody of her children may discourage divorce and increase her tolerance of abuse. Therefore, a woman's ability to provide for her children and secure their welfare is not only an economic concern but also a social one. Abusive behavior victimizes children as much as it victimizes women. A woman can only claim custody of her children if her family is willing to open its home to them or if she is economically capable of providing separate accommodations for herself and the children. Age is a crucial factor for both abused women and their children. Younger women who may consider the possibility of remarriage complicate their children's futures; younger children increase their mothers' difficulty of finding separate accommodations. Dobash and Dobash (1979) suggested that children are at the center of the staying/leaving debate. "For the sake of the children" is the most common explanation women give for leaving their husbands, staying with them, or returning to them, and Saudi women are no different (Almosaed, 2009).

Age, therefore, is a vital factor for women; it is vital when they are subjected to abuse and vital to the decision to leave or remain in a relationship. Aging women are often trapped in violent relationships because of their lack of education and resources. Unlike their younger counterparts, older women's deficits are exacerbated by the passage of time. Increasing age and, for some, poor physical and emotional health create significant impediments to leaving an abusive relationship (Teaster, Roberto, & Dugar 2006).

Rural women are similar to aging women in this regard. Because of their adherence to traditional gender roles and expectations and their lack of alternatives and formal support, it is difficult for them to leave violent relationships. Living in a large city gives women access to support services and jobs and is, consequently, positively associated with the likelihood of permanently leaving an abusive relationship (Anderson, 2003). However, the view of a husband's controlling actions as expected and appropriate is not exclusive to rural, aging women. Younger women living in urban settings may also share this view. Whether through psychological commitment (Strube & Barbour, 1983), "femininity" (Losekeand Cahill, 1984) or self-blame (Anderson 2007; Andrews, 1990), cultures script actions and reactions to violence. As Losekeand Cahill (1984) noted, if violence is not subjectively defined as a "problem", then women have no reason to consider leaving an abusive relationship.

Women are taught from an early age that being a wife and mother are a woman's most important roles (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kim & Gray, 2008; Losekeand Cahill, 1984; Strube and Barbour, 1983) and that one is an incomplete woman unless one is married. For Saudi women, marriage is a sign of success. Therefore, some women marry in their early twenties, while most marry between the ages of 25 and 27. The status of wife is deemed so necessary to a woman's identity that she may have considerable difficulty thinking of herself in any other way. The need to exhibit feminine characteristics encourages abused women to tolerate violence and/or their commitment to their marriage (Gelles, 1985). Losekeand Cahill (1984) suggested that the process of victimization itself places internal constraints on abused women that prevent them from leaving. They argued that once a woman is assaulted, she begins to fear physical retaliation if she leaves.

In the Arab world, the support that a woman receives from her natal family is essential to the decision to leave (Almosaed, 2009). A study on violence against women in Saudi Arabia indicated that 48% of the abused women were asked by their families to sacrifice for the sake of the children; another 18% were asked to be patient and cope with the abuse; and only 13% were encouraged to leave the marriage. A similar study that Gharaibeh and Oweis (2009) conducted on Jordanian women's motivations for staying with violent husbands revealed the following five reasons for this decision: cultural values that accept husbands' right to control their wives, economic dependence on the husband, inadequate family support, self-sacrifice for the sake of the children and the negative social consequences of divorce. Abdulwadood (2013), moreover, emphasized the absence of alternatives and resources for women, such as a stable income, and found that women believe that they can change their husband's attitude over time. Studies have also found a correlation between tolerance of violence and a marriage's degree of stability, i.e., the frequency and severity of the abuse. Herbert et al. (1991) compared women who remained in a violent relationship and those who left an abusive relationship. They noted that the women who remained married did not experience many negative changes, especially in the severity and frequency of the violence; their families were financially stable, and the women blamed themselves for the violence. Gelles (1985), Herbert et al. (1991), and Losekeand Cahill (1984) also found that the frequency and severity of the violence influence the decision to leave. Specifically, they found that women define violence as a problem only if it becomes severe and frequent.

Several studies, including Strube and Barbour's (1983) study, have identified marriage duration and relationship length as significant factors in relationship decisions. Women who leave violent relationships are found to have been in their relationships for shorter periods of time than women who choose to remain with their abusers.

Study Objective

This study seeks to identify the factors that influence women to stay in violent marriages by determining the relationship between these factors and a number of variables. The relationships that are tested are described below:

1. Occupational status (e.g., whether the wife is employed) and the degree of coping with marital violence.
2. Education level (e.g., illiterate, secondary school or below, university or above) and the degree of coping with marital violence.

3. Total number of children in the family (e.g., none, fewer than 3, 3-5, and more than 5) and the degree of coping with marital violence.
4. Marriage duration (e.g., less than 5 years, more than 5 years or approximately 10 years) and the degree of coping with marital violence.
5. Wife's natal family's social status (e.g., high, middle, lower class) and the degree of coping with marital violence.
6. Frequency of violence against the wife (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, annually or few incidents) and the degree of coping with marital violence.

Hypotheses

1. The abused wife's occupational status (employed or unemployed) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of coping with marital violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.
2. The abused wife's educational level (can neither read nor writes secondary or less, bachelor degree or more) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of coping with marital violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.
3. The abused wife's total number of children (no children, fewer than 3, from 3-5, more than 5) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of coping with marital violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.
4. The duration of the abused wife's marriage (less than 5 years, between 5 and 10 years, more than 10 years) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of coping with marital violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.
5. The abused wife's natal family's status (high, middle, low) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of adaption to spousal violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.
6. The frequency of the violent incidents experienced by the abused wife (several incidents daily, almost daily, at least once a week, at least once a month, at least once a year, rarely) has a statistically significant impact on the degree of coping with marital violence (elements and degree) in the study sample.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive methodology because such an approach can be used to explore the differences within the sample and the associations among the variables. A descriptive methodology was, therefore, used to test the hypotheses and to clarify the relationships among the variables, to compare the degree of adaptation to marital violence and the levels of the study's independent variables, and to draw conclusions about the differences and orientations indicated by the results.

Population and Sample

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling, a non-random sampling method, due to the lack of a sampling framework. The sample comprised abused women from Jeddah, specifically abused woman who had sought refuge in a Jeddah shelter supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Among the women at the shelter, we identified wives who shared similar experiences. The sample was composed of 114 abused women with the following characteristics:

Occupational status. 55 employed, 59 unemployed;

Educational level. 4 illiterate, 46 secondary school and below, 46 university education and above;

Total number of children in the family. 10 had no children, 42 had 3 children or fewer, 44 had 3-5 children, 18 had 5 children;

Marriage duration. 17 had been married less than 5 years, 27 between 5 and 10 years, 70 more than 10 years;

Social status. 19 high, 86 middle, 9 low;

Violence frequency. 7 experienced several incidents daily, 15 almost daily, 24 at least once weekly, 24 at least once monthly, 6 at least once annually, 38 rarely.

Data Collection

First: demographic questionnaire (designed by the researchers). This questionnaire contains a number of closed questions about variables that presumably impact women's ability to cope with marital violence, as follows: occupational status, educational level, total number of children in the family, marriage duration, the wife's natal family's social status, and frequency of violence.

Second: Marital Violence Coping Scale (designed by the researchers). To achieve the study's objectives, participants responded to items on a 3-point (1, 2, or 3) scale (applicable, I don't know, not applicable). The total of each dimension is determined by adding the item scores. The scale consists of 48 items that are distributed across the following 6 dimensions, with 8 items in each dimension:

- The wife's personal characteristics (physical, mental, psychological and social),
- Divorce proceedings and child custody,
- Caring for children,
- Absence of family support,
- Economic dependence on the husband, and
- Type of violence.

Scale Validity and Reliability

The researchers calculated the Cronbach's alpha for the total sample and each sub-dimension. The results showed an alpha of 0.956 for the total sample and alphas of, 0.648 for the wife's personal traits, 0.952 for divorce proceedings and child custody, 0.881 for caring for children, 0.863 for absence of family support, and 0.928 for economic dependence on the husband and 0.882 for type of violence subscales. These values had a p-value of 0.001, demonstrating the consistency of the marital violence dimensions. The internal harmony of each dimension was calculated by its total degree. The results yielded scores of 0.609, 0.818, 0.697, 0.834, 0.771, and 0.804 for each dimension, respectively. All are considered positive correlation coefficients and statistically significant at a p-value of 0.001, indicating that the scale's dimensions are connected to its total degree and, thus, the accuracy of the scale.

Study Variables

Independent variables. Occupational status, educational level, total number of children in the family, marriage duration, wife's natal family's social status, and frequency of violence.

Dependent variables (coping with marital violence). Wife's personal characteristics, divorce and child custody proceedings, child care, lack of family support, economic dependence and type of violence.

Statistical Methods

The statistical analyses were performed using the numerous statistical tests were conducted to achieve the study's objectives. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were used to describe the sample, a Pearson Correlation was used to test the scale reliability, t-test was used to identify the differences in occupational status, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to identify the variations among the other variables, and a Scheffe's Test for dimensional comparisons was used to identify the direction of the differences among the variables.

Results and Discussion

The study tested the accuracy of a number of hypotheses. The results are discussed below.

The Impact of the Wife's Occupational Status on the Degree of Marital Violence among the Abused Women in the Study Sample

Table 1 shows the impact of absence of family support and financial dependence on the husband. The t-values were 4.080 for absence of family support, 5.653 for economic dependence on the husband, 4.055 for type of violence sub scales, and 4.336 for total degree, all of which are statistically significant at a p-value of 0.001. The values were 2.583 for the wife's personal characteristics and 2.194 for caring for the children, both of which are statistically significant at 0.05. These results show that differences exist between employed and unemployed women's degree of adaption to violence and that unemployed women are more likely to adapt.

However, professional status had no impact on divorce and child custody, as indicated by the t-value, which did not reach 0.05. Therefore; there were no significant differences in divorce and child custody in the study sample.

Hence, the results revealed that the hypothesis was generally supported. Specifically, the findings demonstrated the impact of five sub-dimensions on women's adaptation to marital violence based on the data collected using the marital violence scale. These results are similar to those found by Dobash and Dobash (1979), Gelles (1976), and Kalmus and Straus (1984), which indicate an inverse relationship between a wife's low income and/or economic dependence on the husband and violence tolerance.

The results are also similar to those found by Chantler (2006), whose study examined not only the relationship between a wife's employment status and her violence tolerance but also the level of income, namely, the wife's ability to meet her economic needs and those of her children after a divorce. However, the results of this study differ from those of (Almosaed, 2009), who's study on abused Saudi women found that women who do not work are more likely to seek divorce than employed women (97% and 67%, respectively).

Wives who are exclusively responsible for their children because of a traditional culture that imposes many restrictions on their opportunities for economic and social independence, such as that of Saudi society, have few options but to tolerate violence and cope with its consequences. Therefore, the results of this study are expected.

The Impact of the Wife's Educational Level on the Degree of Marital Violence among the Abused Women in the Study Sample.

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results, which reveal the impact of educational level on the wife's adaption to spousal violence both between groups and within groups. The adaption to violence is represented by the (F) values, which were 4.540 for total degree, 4.496 for absence of family support and 5.730 for economic dependence on the husband, for each dimension. This value all reached statistical significance (0.05). To identify the differences between the groups according to wife's educational level (absence of family support and economic dependence on the husband), a Scheffe's test (Table 3) was performed to compare the calculations made for two groups for each of the three education levels (illiterate, secondary school and below, university and above).

The following results were found:

Statistically significant differences (0.05) were reached by both the secondary school and below and the university and above variables, and their relationships to absence of family support and economic dependence on husband reached overall statistical significance at 0.01. The test revealed that those who completed secondary school or less were more likely to adapt to marital violence than those who attained other educational levels.

These results indicate that women who completed secondary school or less are more likely to cope with marital violence than those who attained other educational levels, especially in the absence of family support and when they are economically dependent on their husbands.

Education level and marital violence have been the focus of many studies on the reasons for violence and for maintaining violent relationships. Yount (2005), for example, found a relationship between violence and husband's education level in an Egyptian sample. Similarly, Naved and Persson (2005) found that a husband's completion of secondary education is a strong protective factor against violence in Bangladesh. The relationship between staying in a violent relationship and the wife's limited schooling has been observed in many studies, including those by Gelles (1977), Kalmuss and Straus (1982), and Strube and Barbour (1983).

The Impact of the Total Number of Children in the Family on the Degree of Adaptation to Marital Violence among the Abused Women in the Study Sample

Table 4 shows the ANOVA results, which indicate the impact of the number of children (no children, 3 or fewer, from 3 to 5, 5 children or more) on women's adaptation to spousal violence and the relationship of this impact to (two- dimensions) The F values were 5.708 for divorce and child custody and 7.022 for caring for children. Both values reached statistical significance (0.05).

To identify the differences between the groups according to total number of children in the family (divorce and child custody, caring for children), a Scheffe's test (Table 5) was performed to compare the calculations of each groups' relationship with the total number of children in the family variable (no children, 3 or fewer, 3-5 and more than 5 children).

The following differences were found:

Statistically significant differences (0.05) were found between wives with no children and those with 3 children or fewer regarding divorce and child custody. The test revealed that women with 3 or fewer children were more adapted to marital violence than those with no children. Similar results were found for the caring for children variable. The test revealed that women with 3 to 5 children were more likely to cope with marital violence than those with no children. These results indicate that wives with a greater number of children are more tolerant of abuse than those with no or few children, especially with regard to the divorce proceedings and child custody and child care dimensions.

Few studies have examined the relationship between the decision to stay in a violent marriage and number of children. Binney, Harkell, and Nixon (1981), Dobash and Dobash (1998), and Gelles (1977) all identified having children as a factor in women's adaptation to violence. However, in traditional societies such as Saudi Arabia, the purpose of marriage is primarily to raise children. The relationship between tolerating violence and the existence of children is therefore different than the relationship between tolerating violence and the number of children in a family, especially from an economic perspective that considers a woman's ability to provide for her children after a divorce. The greater the woman's fear of the difficulties associated with child custody, child care and economic needs; the more tolerant the abused woman becomes (Abdulwadood, 2013).

The Impact of Marriage Duration on the Degree of Adaptation to Marital Violence among the Abused Women in the Study Sample

The ANOVA results shown in Table 6 reveal a statistically significant impact of the number of years of marriage (less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, more than 10 years) on the caring for children variable. The results yielded an F value of 4.787, which reached statistical significance (0.05). To identify the differences in duration of marriage among the groups, a Scheffe's test (Table 7) was performed to compare the differences between the two groups with regard to number of years married (less than 5 years, less than 10 years, 10 years or more).

The following differences were found:

Significant differences (0.05) were found among wives who were married for less than 5 years and more than 10 years with regard to the number of children variable. The wives who had been married for more than 10 years were more likely to stay in a violent marriage than those who had been married for fewer years. Similar results have been found in studies by Almosaed (2009) and Strube and Barbour (1983). These studies indicated that women who had been in a violent marriage for fewer than 7 years are more willing to leave the marriage than those who had been married for fewer years or who had married a cousin.

The Impact of Social Status on the Degree of Violence Tolerated by the Abused Women in the Study Sample

The ANOVA results shown in Table 8 show a statistically significant impact of social status (high, middle and low) The F values for the wife's family status were 4.109 to the wife's personal characteristics and 4.272 to the type of violence. Both reached statistical significance (0.05). To identify the differences in the wife's natal family's social status among the groups, a Scheffe's test (Table 9) was performed.

The following differences were found:

Significant (0.05) differences were found among wives belonging to low and high social status natal families with regard to the wife's personal characteristics. Wives who came from families with a low social status were more likely to adapt to violent marriages than those who belonged to high social status families. Significant differences (0.05) were found between wives belonging to low and middle class families with regard to type of violence. Women of lower class origins were more likely to adapt to marital violence than those from middle class families. These results indicate that wives belonging to families with a low social status are more adapted to marital violence than those from middle class families with regard to wife's personal characteristics and type of violence.

These results are similar to those of Abdulwadood (2013), Frias and Angel (2007), Kalmuss and Straus (1982), Loseke and Cahill (1984), and Smith (1990), who noted that women who do not work and come from low-income families cannot leave violent marriages because their families refuse to provide them a home after a divorce. Such families are unable to provide for them and for their children and, therefore, encourage their daughters to cope with the abuse and stay in the marriage. By contrast, wives from high or middle class families have high self-esteem and rely on their family's support and status. Therefore, they are less tolerant of violence.

The Impact of the Frequency of Violent Incidents on the Degree of Adaptation to Marital Violence among Abused Women in the Study Sample

The ANOVA results (Table 10) show a statistically significant impact of the number of violent incidents (several times per day, daily, at least once per week, at least once per month, at least once per year, rarely) The F values for the frequency of violent incidents were 7.759, for the wife's personality traits, 6.130 for divorce and child custody, 3.939 for absence of family support, 16.005 for type of violence, and 9.757 for total degree. The indicated dimensions. All of these values were significant at a p-value of 0.001 except absence of family support, which was significant at 0.05.

To identify the differences in the frequency of violent incidents among the groups with regard to the wife's personal characteristics, divorce and child custody, absence of family support, and type of violence dimensions, a Scheffe's test (table 11) was performed.

The following results were found:

Significant differences at 0.05 were found in the wife's personal characteristics between wives who survived rare and little violence and those who experienced violence daily, once per week, or once per month. The difference was found between wives who experienced rare violence and wives who were subjected to violence once per week or once per month. Those who were subjected to more violence were more likely to cope with marital violence than those who experienced rare or minimal violence.

Significant differences at a p-value of 0.001 were found in divorce and child custody between wives who survived rare and minimal violence and those who experienced violence once per month. Those who were subjected to violence at least once per month were more likely to cope with marital violence than those who experienced rare and minimal violence.

Significant differences at 0.05 were found in the absence of family support dimension between wives who survived rare and minimal violence and those subjected to daily violence. Those who were subjected to daily violence were more likely to adapt to marital violence than those who experienced rare and minimal violence.

Significant differences at a p-value of 0.001 were found in the type of violence dimension between wives who survived rare and minimal violence and those who experienced daily or weekly violence. Significant differences at 0.05 were found in type of violence between those who were subjected to rare and minimal violence and those who experienced violence at least once per month. The results indicated that those who were subjected to frequent violence were more adapted to marital violence than those who experienced rare and minimal violence.

Significant differences at a p-value of 0.001 were found among wives who survived rare and minimal violence and those who experienced daily, weekly and monthly violence. Those who were subjected to violence more frequently (i.e., daily, weekly, or monthly) were more likely to cope with marital violence than those who experienced rare and minimal violence.

These results indicate that, in general, those who are subjected to frequent incidents of violence are more likely to cope with it. Walker's (2009) concept of learned helplessness states that battered women showed more signs of learned helplessness than women who had escaped such a relationship. In addition, Strube and Barbour's (1983) study on the relationship between violent marriage duration and violence tolerance confirms that the more a woman is subjected to violence, the more reluctant she becomes to leave the marriage. Furthermore, Frieze (1979), Herbert et al. (1991), and Sleutel (1998), studied the relationship between the decision to stay in a violent marriage and changes in the degree and type of violence (physical or moral). They concluded that abused women become more indecisive about leaving a violent marriage the more they are subjected to violence. In other words, they become accustomed to violence.

Conclusion

1. The impact of the wife's occupational status on personal characteristics, caring for children, lack of family support, economic dependence on husband and marital violence coping total score was greater for wives who did not work. However, the results were ambiguous for divorce and child custody. In addition to cultural and economic challenges that limit women's opportunities for economic independence and social interaction, the named factors negatively impact the wife's ability to fulfill such responsibilities. Therefore, she is compelled to endure and adapt to more violence.
2. The impact of the wife's educational level on lack of family support, economic dependence on the husband and the marital violence coping total score was greater for wives who attained a secondary education or less. However, the results were ambiguous for the remaining dimensions of coping with violence. In addition, wives with little education are prevented from finding suitable jobs that could ensure stability for themselves and their children. Their stability is also threatened by lack of family support and economic dependence on the husband.
3. The impact of the total number of children in the family on divorce and child custody and caring for children was greater for wives who had more children. However, the results were ambiguous for the remaining dimensions of coping with violence. Mothers with more children have more responsibilities, causing them to worry about divorce, child custody and securing their rights. Therefore, such women tend to cope with marital violence and become accustomed to it.

4. The impact of marriage duration on caring for children was greater for wives who had been married longer. However, the results were ambiguous for the remaining dimensions of coping with violence. In addition, the need to care for her children was one of the compelling factors that motivated a wife to cope with violence and remain in a violent marriage.

5. The impact of the wife's natal family's status on personal characteristics and type of violence was greater for wives from low class families. However, the results were ambiguous for the remaining dimensions. Wives from high or middle class families show better personal characteristics and depend on their family to support them as they cope with marital violence and continue the marriage relationship.

6. The impact of violence frequency on a wife's personal characteristics, child custody, absence of family support, type of violence and marital violence coping total score was greater for wives subjected to frequent violence. However, the results for the remaining dimensions were ambiguous. The results reflect an increased fluctuation in the ability to cope with violence the more the wife is subjected to violence and increased adaptation to the violence the more frequently it occurs.

The reasons that compel abused women to remain in or leave a violent marriage are numerous and complex. Moreover, the data are conflicting and non-conclusive in most studies. Nonetheless, economic dependence on the husband is crucial to a woman's decision to stay in or leave the marriage and is the decisive factor in coping with violence. Some women may stay in troubled marriages because they were raised to believe that different rules and expectations exist for men and women. In some cultures, for example, violence is a trait of manhood, and male violence is not punishable. Some women believe they must exhibit traits of sacrifice, tolerance and obedience. Therefore, they cope with an abusive marriage to preserve their dignity, which would be violated if they revealed the secrets of their personal and family lives.

Why do women remain in violent marriages? The question itself is based on an unsound hypothesis, according to Dobash and Dobash (1979). Some women do not end their violent marriages, some leave the marriage immediately after the first violent incident, and other woman may leave and return many times before deciding finally to leave the marriage.

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Tables

Table 1: T-test Results Showing the Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components According to the Wife's Occupational Status Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Working		Non-Working		T	Sig.
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
The wife's personal characteristics	12.9455	3.85582	14.8136	3.86172	2.583	0.05
Divorce proceedings and child custody	15.1091	6.44542	16.5763	6.53954	1.205	-
Caring for children	16.3636	5.66132	18.5254	4.85072	2.194	0.05
The absence of family support	13.1091	5.09420	16.9492	4.95296	4.080	0.01
Economic dependence on the husband	11.2364	4.37571	16.8136	5.97257	5.653	0.01
Type of violence	14.2909	5.61635	18.1864	4.62182	4.055	0.01
Total	83.0545	24.51713	101.8644	21.78457	4.336	0.01

Table 2: ANOVA Results Showing the Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components according to the Wife's Educational Level Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Analysis of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The wife's personal characteristics	Between Groups	54.307	2	27.153	1.760	-
	Within Groups	1712.816	111	15.431		
	Total	1767.123	113			
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Between Groups	276.803	2	138.401	3.408	-
	Within Groups	4508.224	111	40.615		
	Total	4785.026	113			
Caring for children	Between Groups	79.856	2	39.928	1.408	-
	Within Groups	3148.609	111	28.366		
	Total	3228.465	113			
The absence of family support	Between Groups	243.088	2	121.544	4.496	0.05
	Within Groups	3000.851	111	27.035		
	Total	3243.939	113			
Economic dependence on the husband	Between Groups	373.224	2	186.612	5.730	0.05
	Within Groups	3615.057	111	32.568		
	Total	3988.281	113			
Type of violence	Between Groups	241.200	2	120.600	4.273	-
	Within Groups	3133.054	111	28.226		
	Total	3374.254	113			
Total	Between Groups	5297.409	2	2648.704	4.540	0.05
	Within Groups	64757.539	111	583.401		
	Total	70054.947	113			

Table 3: Scheffe's Test of Dimensional Comparisons to Identify the Direction of the Differences between the Variables according to the Wife's Educational Level Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Educational Level		Mean Difference	Sig.	Direction of Significance
The absence of family support	Secondary or less	College or more	2.69	0.05	Secondary or less
Economic dependence on the husband	Secondary or less	College or more	3.71	0.05	Secondary or less
Total	Secondary or less	College or more	13.67	0.01	Secondary or less

Table 4: ANOVA Results Showing the Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components according to the Wife's Number of Children Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Analysis of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The wife's personal characteristics	Between Groups	10.390	3	3.463	.217	-
	Within Groups	1756.733	110	15.970		
	Total	1767.123	113			
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Between Groups	644.573	3	214.858	5.708	0.05
	Within Groups	4140.453	110	37.640		
	Total	4785.026	113			
Caring for children	Between Groups	518.907	3	172.969	7.022	0.05
	Within Groups	2709.557	110	24.632		
	Total	3228.465	113			
The absence of family support	Between Groups	204.726	3	68.242	2.470	-
	Within Groups	3039.213	110	27.629		
	Total	3243.939	113			
Economic dependence on the husband	Between Groups	175.050	3	58.350	1.683	-
	Within Groups	3813.231	110	34.666		
	Total	3988.281	113			
Type of violence	Between Groups	273.121	3	91.040	3.229	-
	Within Groups	3101.133	110	28.192		
	Total	3374.254	113			
Total	Between Groups	6497.997	3	2165.999	3.749	-
	Within Groups	63556.951	110	577.790		
	Total	70054.947	113			

Table 5. Scheffe's Test of Dimensional Comparisons to Identify the Direction of the Differences between the Variables based on the Wife's Number of Children Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Number of Children		Mean Difference	Sig.	Direction of Significance
Divorce proceedings and child custody	No children	3 or fewer children	5.60476	0.05	3 or fewer children
	No children	From 3-5 children	7.42727	0.05	From 3-5 children
Caring for children	No children	More than 5 children	7.92222	0.05	More than 5 children

Table 6. ANOVA Results Showing Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components according to the Wife's Marriage Duration Variable

Spousal Violence Dimensions	Analysis of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The wife's personal characteristics	Between Groups	40.739	2	20.369	1.310	-
	Within Groups	1726.384	111	15.553		
	Total	1767.123	113			
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Between Groups	170.417	2	85.208	2.050	-
	Within Groups	4614.610	111	41.573		
	Total	4785.026	113			
Caring for children	Between Groups	256.346	2	128.173	4.787	0.05
	Within Groups	2972.119	111	26.776		
	Total	3228.465	113			
The absence of family support	Between Groups	55.042	2	27.521	.958	-
	Within Groups	3188.896	111	28.729		
	Total	3243.939	113			
Economic dependence on the husband	Between Groups	87.969	2	43.985	1.252	-
	Within Groups	3900.311	111	35.138		
	Total	3988.281	113			
Type of violence	Between Groups	92.547	2	46.273	1.565	-
	Within Groups	3281.708	111	29.565		
	Total	3374.254	113			
Total	Between Groups	1931.613	2	965.807	1.574	-
	Within Groups	68123.334	111	613.724		
	Total	70054.947	113			

Table 7. Scheffe's Test of Dimensional Comparisons to Identify the Direction of the Differences between the Variables based on the Wife's Marriage Duration Variable

Spousal Violence Dimensions	Wife's Number of Years of Marriage		Mean Difference	Sig.	Direction of Significance
Caring for children	Less than 5 years	More than 10 years	4.04202	0.05	More than 10 years

Table 8. ANOVA Results Showing the Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components according to the Wife's Family Status Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Analysis of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The wife's personal characteristics	Between Groups	121.803	2	60.902	4.109	0.05
	Within Groups	1645.319	111	14.823		
	Total	1767.123	113			
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Between Groups	65.630	2	32.815	.772	-
	Within Groups	4719.396	111	42.517		
	Total	4785.026	113			
Caring for children	Between Groups	9.942	2	4.971	.171	-
	Within Groups	3218.523	111	28.996		
	Total	3228.465	113			
The absence of family support	Between Groups	156.008	2	78.004	2.804	-
	Within Groups	3087.931	111	27.819		
	Total	3243.939	113			
Economic dependence on the husband	Between Groups	140.767	2	70.384	2.031	-
	Within Groups	3847.513	111	34.662		
	Total	3988.281	113			
Type of violence	Between Groups	241.139	2	120.569	4.272	0.05
	Within Groups	3133.116	111	28.226		
	Total	3374.254	113			
Total	Between Groups	3404.223	2	1702.111	2.835	-
	Within Groups	66650.725	111	600.457		
	Total	70054.947	113			

Table 9. Scheffe's Test of Dimensional Comparisons to Identify the Direction of Differences between the Variables based on the Wife's Family Status Variable

Marital Violence Dimensions	Social Status		Mean Difference	Sig.	Direction of Significance
The wife's personal characteristics	Low	High	4.28070	0.05	Low social status
	Low	Middle	3.58915	0.05	Low social status
Type of violence	Low	Middle	4.88630	0.05	Low social status

Table 10. ANOVA Results Showing the Significant Differences in Coping with Marital Violence and Its Components according to the Frequency of the Violent Incidents Committed Against the Wife

Marital Violence Dimensions	Analysis of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The wife's personal characteristics	Between Groups	467.009	5	93.402	7.759	0.01
	Within Groups	1300.113	108	12.038		
	Total	1767.123	113			
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Between Groups	1057.737	5	211.547	6.130	0.01
	Within Groups	3727.289	108	34.512		
	Total	4785.026	113			
Caring for children	Between Groups	390.492	5	78.098	2.972	-
	Within Groups	2837.973	108	26.278		
	Total	3228.465	113			
The absence of family support	Between Groups	500.304	5	100.061	3.939	0.05
	Within Groups	2743.635	108	25.404		
	Total	3243.939	113			
Economic dependence on the husband	Between Groups	435.754	5	87.151	2.649	-
	Within Groups	3552.527	108	32.894		
	Total	3988.281	113			
Type of violence	Between Groups	1436.122	5	287.224	16.005	0.01
	Within Groups	1938.132	108	17.946		
	Total	3374.254	113			
Total	Between Groups	21797.796	5	4359.559	9.757	0.01
	Within Groups	48257.152	108	446.825		
	Total	70054.947	113			

Table 11. Scheffe's Test of Dimensional Comparisons to Identify the Direction of Differences between the Variables according to the Frequency of the Violent Incidents

Marital violence dimensions	Violence Repetition		Mean Difference	Sig.	Direction of significance
The wife's personal characteristics	Very rare	Almost daily	5.71053	0.05	Almost daily
	Very rare	At least once weekly	3.83553	0.05	At least once weekly
	Very rare	At least once monthly	3.50219	0.05	At least once monthly
Divorce proceedings and child custody	Very rare	At least once monthly	9.21754	0.01	At least once monthly
The absence of family support	Almost daily	Very rare	5.59123	0.05	Almost daily
	Very rare	Almost daily	9.48947	0.01	Almost daily
Type of violence	Very rare	At least once weekly	7.83114	0.01	At least once weekly
	Very rare	At least once monthly	5.49781	0.05	At least once monthly
	Very rare	Almost daily	38.73860	0.01	Almost daily
Total	Very rare	At least once weekly	26.39693	0.01	At least once weekly
	Very rare	At least once monthly	22.18860	0.01	At least once monthly