

Faith-Based Domestic Violence Training: Building Community Responses with an Islamic Perspective in Palestine

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Domestic violence or intimate partner violence affects 1 in 3 women internationally, but despite impacting women from all nations, it has somehow become a point of contention between more secular factions in the western world and traditional Islamic countries under Muslim majority rule. This perceived conflict of ideology has led to a polarization serving to separate affected communities and slow progress on needed resolutions. In Palestine, a long-awaited proposed Family Protection Act has been paralyzed due to public outcry that it is not representative of the cultural and religious context of the country. The following study introduced a training in domestic violence for mental health and social service providers in Palestine that was created by the Peaceful Families Project, a non-profit educational and advocacy organization. The study aims to introduce the understanding that domestic violence is in fact a Muslim issue with clear directives for prevention using a faith-based methodology. Despite having professional experience working with domestic violence over years, participants demonstrated significant changes in knowledge, attitude, and stated potential behaviors after the training. Qualitative data enriched the discussion with participants stating that such efforts could change the narrative and overcome the perceived western bias of domestic violence awareness currently offered in Palestine. It also opens the door for indigenous perspectives and creative, culturally generated solutions to this critical issue. Using faith-based initiatives that correspond to the native culture of a community can increase motivation, ownership, and the opportunity for unique programming and innovative methodologies.

Keywords

faith-based • domestic violence • Islamic perspectives • Palestine

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Introduction

Domestic violence is known to affect from 25–30% of the population internationally (UNFPA, 2016) and has been found to predict negative life satisfaction (Bdier & Mohamid, 2021), including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Thabat et al., 2015), as well as negatively impact individual, family, and community economics (Okasha et al., 2015) in Palestinian territories. However, despite documentation demonstrating the stark reality of the issue, efforts to create a system of protection for domestic violence victims, such as that outlined in the proposed Palestinian Family Protection Act, have been strongly opposed in the general population (Bdier and Mohamid, 2021).

Violence against women in Palestinian territories is a multi-faceted issue. In one study with over 4,000 women in Palestine, it was found that only 33% had *not* experienced some level of violence, such as occupation-related state-sponsored aggression, unregulated settler attacks, as well as domestic and intimate partner violence (Okasha et al., 2015). In that sample, domestic violence was also analyzed with 34% of victims of family violence reporting that they had suffered psychological abuse, 17% physical assault or beatings, and 14% forced or unwanted sexual violations (Okasha et al., 2015). In a more recent survey (Baldi, 2018), it was found that domestic or intimate partner violence was present in 49% of the population in the West Bank and 74% in Gaza. The same study reports that of the victims, 51% suffered economic abuse, 55% suffered social abuse (isolation, bad reputations, scared, and more), and 23% reported physical or sexual abuse. Of those affected, 24% are reported to be minors, 23% between the ages of 21–25, and 20% between the ages of 26–35, indicating a youth bias. Of that group, 63% remained silent and told no one of the violence, and only 7% sought help (Baldi, 2018). In 2020, Shaheen et al. completed a survey that reported that 27% of married women reported violence in a 12-month period, with only 5% seeking assistance. Barriers to seeking relief were stated to be self-blame, fear of losing contact with their children, fear of being labeled *crazy*, lack of understanding that domestic violence is a crime, and lack of knowledge of resources available to victims, especially those economically dependent on the perpetrator (Shaheen et al., 2020).

The individual negative effects of being a victim of domestic violence is historically well documented specific to the Palestinian community. In 2000, Abdel reported that in Gaza, 11% of women reported to be victims of domestic violence, with 15% of those reaching the diagnosis for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). More current investigations indicate that the majority of identified victims suffer from symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Thabat et al., 2015). Veronese, Mahamid, and Bdier (2021) reported that victims of intimate partner violence demonstrated not only psychological symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, but also experienced decreased life satisfaction in all areas.

In addition to high levels of negative effects, it has been noted that there are few alternatives or resources offered to Palestinian victims of domestic violence. In a 2019 investigation, Buloushah et al. reported that in a survey of Palestinian women, intimate partner violence incidence was 29% of the sample in the West Bank and 51% in Gaza. The major themes that emerged were the lack of support and resources for victims, and a “learn to live with it” resolution strategy across both territories.

Domestic violence is a category of behaviors that have been globally hard to legislate as they occur in “private spaces” (Hajar, 2004). Unless there is a general awareness that this behavior is unacceptable, and the victim reports it and the perpetrator is consequated—which involves criminalizing established standards of the intimate lives of many individuals—there is little hope for change. Such legislation, and its subsequent system of enforcement, is predicated on the assumption that the society agrees on what is an *allowable* manner of being within a home between spouses or family members, and that the citizens consent to the local or governmental

forces having authority in the normally private realm of family functioning. With Palestine in a zone of conflict, under occupation, and with little to no faith in the administration of justice from any authority, this is a large leap of faith.

Globally, legislation related to domestic violence has been enacted under the provision of a human rights context. In 1979, the United Nations created the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDWA), which was instituted in 1981 by the 189 states that ratified it. The United States is still not a signatory; however, many jurisdictions enacted local laws related to domestic violence starting in the late 1970s (Hajar, 2004). In 1990, the leaders of Muslim majority states, many of whom had previously ratified CEDWA with reservations, created an alternative Declaration of Human Rights in Cairo endorsing much of the UN language except when in “conflict with Sharia Law mandates” (Hajr, 2004). Global legislation related to culturally determined family-based customs, such as age of marriage, forced marriage, rape in marriage, and family violence, is difficult to construct because the basic foundations of understanding may not be aligned, making it impossible to mandate and monitor in terms of enforcement. It is further complicated when various heterogeneous religious and cultural groups share a country that is not ruled exclusively by the rule structure of one country.

Even the Muslim ideal of Sharia-based laws may not be definitive. Sharia, which in Arabic translates to *the path*, is a set of legislative suggestions that governs Muslim community life. Sharia includes family relations based on the Qur’an and Hadith, and creates a deductive legal system that is not universal but interpretative, with specific groups and countries creating their own systems based on their circumstances. Sharia is not universal and can be contradictory (Hajar, 2004).

Palestine was recognized as a state by the United Nations in 2012 and recognizes CEDWA (in 2014) (Baldi, 2018). However, as the legal structure of Palestine is based on a complicated combination of Jordanian, Israeli, Egyptian, and Ottoman mandates, the application and implementation of the intent of the convention has been difficult (Baldi, 2018). For example, in 2016, family protection units were established in the Public Prosecutor’s Offices to manage cases involving domestic violence with specially trained advocates and judges. However, since the unit is so small, many cases are processed outside of the structure by random judges who rule idiosyncratically (WCLAC, 2020). Problems with the current penal code include the absence of a statute for marital rape, lack of a definition of incest, instability of marital age statutes, as well as a lack of accountability in sexual violations of minors if the perpetrator is “unaware” of the individual’s minor status (WCLAC, 2020). The legislative issues are further complicated by the 2007 suspension of the Palestinian Legislative Council that froze joint legislation, affecting the West Bank and Gaza since that time (PWSD, 2020).

In 2019, in response to increased incidences of death and serious injury to women related to family violence (both *honor*-related and domestic violence), the Palestinian Authorities Ministry of Women’s affairs, in conjunction with the Union of Palestinian Lawyers, completed a proposal for a Family Protection Law that would address many of the issues lacking in current law, including the issues of domestic violence (Abumaria, 2019). However, while the new law was enthusiastically received by women’s rights organizations and international funders involved in the territories, it was vehemently opposed by the general population who judged its presumptions as “western” in origin and not representative of Palestinian culture and lifestyle. Currently, the law is currently stalled with advocates on both sides unable to reach an agreement (Haj-Yahia et al., 2021). Interestingly, this was not unlike a similar law proposed in Pakistan in 2016, which included defining domestic violence and sexual violations in marriage, establishing a national hotline, creating orders of protection, and a building shelter system for domestic violence victims. The Pakistani law also included criminal consequences and monitoring for domestic violence perpetrators; however, this law was declared a “recolonization” of the country by opponents (Reuters, 2016).

Peaceful Families Project (PFP) is a 20-year-old organization based in the United States that has been working for the prevention of domestic violence using an Islamic perspective for Muslim communities (Alkhateeb & Abugideiri, 2007). PFP promotes an understanding of domestic violence as both a human rights issue involving oppression (for which the Qur'anic response is clear) and a violation of the model of marriage presented in Islamic sacred text, which states that the goal of marriage is the creation of peace by using love, compassion, respect, and leadership based on mutual consultation (Alwani & Abugideri, 2003). PFP has a long history of promoting prevention of domestic violence through the training of religious leaders, research, and the construction of resources for Muslims addressing the issues of domestic violence (peacefulfamilies.org, 2021). The PFP model defines domestic violence within the framework of the Islamic religion and offers faith-based solutions and prevention strategies for Muslim communities.

It has long been held that having social support and the feeling of agency is a protective factor in both the perpetration and recouperation from violence (Agbaria & Bdier, 2020). When that social support is intertwined with one's community of faith, it is able to create more positive social changes that reduce violence and increase prosocial behaviors (Bair, 2014). Specifically in the West Bank, Mahamid and Berte (2020) documented that reliance on spiritual support and participation in religious institutions acted as a protective factor from the symptoms of politically motivated violence. It imagined that this faith-based support in the face of cultural and religious justification could assist not only in providing support for victims of domestic violence but help to create an understanding of domestic violence as a community ideal internal to Islam and the Palestinian culture. Such an understanding could then promote domestic violence programming and legislation not as externally imposed values but socially congruent goals to be embraced by the society.

The current study was conducted to explore the acceptance and impact of exposure and training in an Islamically based curriculum of domestic violence prevention and intervention on mental health providers in the West Bank of Palestine. Specifically, the current study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does the training program based on faith-based domestic violence improve awareness and professional skills related to domestic violence among Palestinian health providers?
2. Are there significant differences in awareness and professional skills of health providers related to domestic violence on the post-test of the study due to study demographic variables, such as gender, residency, academic level, and age?

Methods

Sample

Participants (see Table 1) for the study were found through informational invitation from an international NGO and a local university in Nablus, Palestine. Participants included 16 Palestinian individuals, including 7 females and 9 males. Of the participants, 50% were from an urban population, 30% were from villages, and 20% were living in Palestinian camps. The age range of the participants were: 13% between 22–25 years old, 25% between 26–33 years old, 25% between 34–41 years old, 31% between 42–50 years old, and the remaining 6% were over 50 years old. Sixty-three participants had a master's degree and 37 participants had a bachelor's degree. For inclusion in the study, participants were required to be native Arabic speakers

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of study sample (N = 16)

Characteristic	Number	Percent %
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	9	56
Female	7	44
Total	16	100
<i>Geographical region</i>		
City	8	50
Village	5	30
Camp	3	20
Total	16	100
<i>Age</i>		
22–25	2	13
26–33	4	25
34–41	4	25
42–50	5	31
Over 50	1	9.8
Total	16	100
<i>Academic degree</i>		
MA	10	63
BA	6	37
Total	16	100

and Palestinian, and to have worked with domestic violence cases. Participants provided their informed consent online before data was collected. This study was performed with permissions from the Declaration of Helsinki (1967), and the American Psychological Association, and it was approved by An-Najah Institutional Review Board IRB (Archived number, September 12) before the data collection was initiated.

Measures

Awareness related to domestic violence scale: For the purposes of the current study, the researchers developed an awareness and professional skills scale to test the level of awareness and professional skills of mental health providers before and after the training program. The scale had 20 items with a five-point Likert scale: (5) very high, (4) above average, (3) average, (2) below average, and (1) very low, and measured knowledge, attitude related to domestic violence, and behavioral potential (what the individual felt that they could do in the face to either a situation of domestic violence or as a community to prevent domestic violence). A committee of experts in psychology reviewed the items of the scale for content validity and comprehensiveness; minor modifications were made based on feedback from the committee members. To test the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha formula was used for a sample of 50 mental health providers who work with domestic violence issues in Palestine (reliability sample) to assess internal consistency for the scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated high internal consistency for the total scale (0.90).

Training Program

The study training program was created based on a template used by the Peaceful Families Project in the United States, which was created for Muslim audiences. The curriculum consists of five sections, including a general description of Domestic Violence, Incidence of Domestic Violence in Muslim Communities and distinct characteristics, Qur'anic teachings and Hadith related to gender, Qur'anic teaching and Hadith related to marriage and domestic violence, prevention methods, and community engagement. For this training, Palestinian audiences were also asked to offer information specific to defining domestic violence in a Palestinian context, identifying current practice and resources to address domestic violence, and engaging in brainstorming to increase prevention and culturally specific programming in domestic violence. Due to the current issues, a discussion about the proposed Palestinian Family Protection Act and the community reaction to the bill was included. The training was completed within eight hours and all the participants completed the training. Training was held in English with Arabic text and discussion. Two doctoral level trainers familiar with the curriculum (one male and one female) facilitated the presentation and discussion portions of the training.

Analysis Plan

Means, standard deviations, and paired samples t-test were calculated for study participants on pre-test and post-test of the domestic violence awareness scale. To test differences in domestic violence awareness on post-test among experimental group participants due to study demographic variables, such as age, academic degree, and residence place, the ANOVA test was conducted.

Procedures

Participants for the study were located through informational invitation from an international NGO and a local university in Nablus, Palestine. Recruitment lasted for one month, and seven organizations supplied 16 participants. Participants all held graduate degrees in public health, psychology, or counseling, or were current graduate students in psychology. Participants who agreed to participate in the study signed an informed consent. The instruments and training program of our study were prepared to not be emotionally distressing in anyway. Furthermore, all participants were provided with contacts in the mental health services through whom to seek help should symptoms arise due to their participation in the research. Our study used a one-group quasi-experimental design to test the perforce of participants using an awareness related to domestic violence scale before and after the training program. Moreover, a mixed methods design using thematic analysis was conducted to explore participants' viewpoints concerning domestic violence and needed intervention programs in Palestine.

Findings

Means, standard deviations, and paired samples were calculated for study participants on pre-test and post-test, as shown in Table 2.

Results of Table 2 show significant differences in domestic violence awareness between pre-test and post-test in favor of post-test.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for study variable on pre-test and post-test (N = 16)

Dependent variable	Variables	Pre-test			Post-test		t value	df	Sig.
		No.	M	S.D	M	S.D			
Domestic violence awareness	Experimental group	16	2.3594	.23711	4.1771	.17970	-22.657	15	*.001

* $p < 0.001$

Table 3. ANOVA test for domestic violence awareness due to study variables (N = 16)

Dependent variable	Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig.
Domestic violence awareness	Age	.023	2	.011	.355	.712
	Degree	.025	2	.013	.395	.686
	Residence	.088	2	.044	1.375	.307
	Gender	.106	1	.106	3.300	.107
	Error	.256	8			
	Total	.484	15			

To test the differences in domestic violence awareness on post-test among experimental group participants due to study demographic, the ANOVA test was conducted, as shown in Table 3.

The results of Table 3 show no significant differences in domestic violence awareness on post-test among the experimental group due to study demographic variables.

Qualitative Data

Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (Parker, 2005) was applied to the written transcripts to identify the main themes emerging from the material. Bottom-up, data-driven textual analysis was applied to extract categories from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each interview was closely examined with a view to pinpoint concepts and not just statements containing similar words. The analytical process comprised the following steps:

1. The researcher conducted open-ended analysis on the participants' narratives to identify the main research themes.
2. The themes were coded and organized into structured categories.
3. The categories were discussed and agreed on by five judges.

The thematic content analysis of the 16 interview transcripts led to the identification of five themes: women's rights towards her husband, decisions get made in an Islamic marriage, domestic violence in Palestine, intervention programs for domestic violence in Palestine, and needed interventions programs.

Women's Rights Towards Her Husband

The Qur'an states clearly and repeatedly that human beings were all created from the same nafs. Furthermore, it states that God created for us humans from our own nafs; mates with

whom we could find tranquility. Elsewhere, the Qur'an describes the marital relationship as one characterized by tranquility, mercy, and affection. In fact, the Qur'an says the husband and wife are each other's *garments*, meaning they protect each other's privacy and cover each other's shortcomings. This view has important consequences in various areas of gender relation. Islam commands that men treat their wives with compassion and full respect as women are respected and honored in Islam (Al-Hibri, 2001).

One participant mentioned, "In Islam, men should respect their wife and take into considerations all of their needs" (29-year-old female psychologist).

Another social worker indicated, "Commitment to what is contained in Islamic law of acceptance, respect, and good treatment, and not insulting women and diminishing their rights" (28-year-old female social worker).

Another mental health worker mentioned, "Men should participate with women in all family issues, treat them with respect and take care of them" (36-year-old male mental health worker).

A clinical psychologist indicated, "Men should understand the needs of women in our Palestinian society, and provide them with all support and assistance, especially that Palestinian society is going through difficult conditions that include occupation and discrimination in rights against women" (30-year-old female counselor).

Decisions Get Made in an Islamic Marriage

In a Muslim family, the entire family should be part of the *shoora*, which is an important concept in Islam where family members are allowed to take part in the decision-making process. It is a great way to build a solid relationship between family members, where the good and the bad of each alternative needs to be carefully weighed. The consequences of each choice should be thought through in detail. The results of selecting each alternative should be visualized to reduce the chances of making the wrong decision (Glass et al., 2019).

One mental health provider mentioned, "According to Islamic law, decisions should be made in the family based on consultation between the spouses, and the need for each of them to respect the other's point of view and not neglect his or her point of view" (30-year-old male mental health provider).

Another clinical psychologist mentioned, "Decisions should be taken in consultation, according to Islamic law, men are the main supporters of women, and they should not be dominant and controlling women" (35-year-old female counselor).

One female counselor expressed, "Islamic law urges spouses to consult, dialogue, and discuss all details related to family matters" (27-year-old female counselor).

Domestic Violence in Palestine

In Palestine, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is still deemed a crucial problem enrooted in discriminatory laws and traditional habits, exacerbated by the ongoing Israeli military occupation (Baldi, 2018). Moreover, the lack of updated data makes it difficult to grasp the magnitude of the phenomenon entirely. The last systematic data provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2011) reported the 37% of wives were exposed to a form of violence from their husbands (29.9 % in the West Bank and 51.1% in the Gaza Strip), with a slight minority referred to the court after seeking the police protection. Moreover, 48.8% (West Bank) and 76.4% (Gaza) (average of 58.6%) were reported to be psychologically abused; 55.1% were subjected to economic violence, 54.8% social violence, 23.5%, physical, and 11.8% sexual violence (Veronese, Mahamid, & Bdier, 2021).

One participant said, “I think that domestic violence is a very common problem in Palestine, and it has very negative effects on women and children, and it also contributes to the disintegration of many families and the occurrence of divorce” (30-year-old male mental health provider).

Another participant shared, “I think that the difficult conditions that Palestinian society is going through, especially the occupation have increased the level of violence directed against women. Recently, Palestinian society witnessed many cases of killing of women over honor related issues” (31-year-old female psychologist).

Another mental health provider expressed, “The problem of violence is one of the societal problems prevalent in the Palestinian society, and it is due to the difficult economic conditions that some families are going through, and the failure to properly understand the teachings of Islam, which calls for non-violence, and dealing with kindness, especially with women and children” (34-year-old male mental health provider).

Intervention Programs for Domestic Violence in Palestine

Humanitarian settings have diverse governmental, international, and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with varied levels of skill focused on increasing community and institutional awareness of domestic violence as a rights violation, as well as responding to survivors through services across multiple sectors, including healthcare, education, protection, and justice. Initiatives in humanitarian emergencies also focus on capacity-building of service providers and developing programs to respond to domestic violence. Domestic violence primary prevention programs seek to facilitate change by addressing the underlying causes and drivers of violence at a population level. Such programs include initiatives to economically empower girls and women, institutionalization of legal protections for domestic violence, enshrining women’s rights and gender equality within national legislation and policy, and other measures to promote gender equality. Increasingly, programs are also targeting transformation of social norms that underpin and maintain acceptance of harmful social norms that sustain domestic violence (Mahamid & Veronese, 2021). One psychologist mentioned, “There are not many effective programs to reduce domestic violence in Palestine, most of these programs focus on the awareness aspect” (27-years-old female counselor).

Another mental health provider stated, “The only programs related to domestic violence in Palestine are family protection programs, and this is done by providing protection from the police for women who are subjected to violence. The police usually provide special places to protect women who are threatened with death from their families” (31-year-old female mental health provider).

One clinical psychologist conveyed, “A small number of psychological support programs have been implemented for abused women, but these interventions were not effective enough, given the peculiarity of the Palestinian society, which is keen not to disclose family problems, and the punishment that a woman can face if she talks about her husband’s mistreatment” (29-year-old male clinical psychologist).

Needed Interventions Programs

The Palestinian territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem are formerly part of the British Mandate of Palestine and have been occupied by Israel since 1967 (Lindsay, 2007). These areas have experienced substantial political instability, military violence, and social unrest during the last half century. Mental health care services were primarily organized and operated by NGOs until control of social programs was transferred to the Palestinian National Authority (Palestinian Counseling Center [PCC], 2010). Counseling and mental health care

services have expanded over the years, but major areas of growth exist in regulation, training, and professional development for various counseling populations, such as battered women (Shawahin & Çiftçi, 2012).

One mental health provider said, “There is a need to develop therapeutic intervention programs targeting battered women in Palestine. Religious leaders, along with psychologists, can also contribute to raising awareness of this problem to mitigate the effects of domestic violence” (34-year-old female psychologist).

One counselor expressed, “There is a need to develop the skills of psychologists to work with battered women, as we do not have many skills to build effective intervention programs targeting battered women” (36-year-old male counselor).

One counselor shared, “Seminars and workshops should be conducted targeting educational and academic institutions aimed at educating the community about domestic violence and ways to prevent it. The curricula should also include educational topics related to domestic violence and its prevention” (29-year-old female counselor).

Discussion

In the current study, participants included mental health and social welfare professionals with graduate degrees from seven well-established international NGOs providing services to victims of violence (including domestic violence) in Palestine. Participants demonstrated significant changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intention after an 8-hour training that utilized an Islamic Faith-Based curriculum to understand, prevent, and manage situations of domestic violence. Despite having years of experience, participants reported that they were not familiar with and had not previously utilized faith-based methodologies, despite more than 80% of the sample self-identifying as Muslim and living in a Muslim majority country.

While the sample in this study is small and the measurements are based on self-reporting, the findings are promising. They indicate that novel information based in sacred texts can expand the opinions, attitudes, and potential service provision in areas that have been so resistant to change, such as domestic violence, using traditional methods imported from western societies.

Culturally inspired methodologies of managing domestic violence at the individual and societal level have not abounded in Muslim majority countries. Buloushah et al. (2019) reports that domestic violence victims in both the West Bank and Gaza found little support and no concrete resources, and “learning to live with it” was the major solution proposed. Shaheen et al. (2020) found that despite 27% of married respondents reporting violence in a 12-month period in Palestine, only 5% sought assistance and stated that self-blame, fear of losing contact with their children, not having knowledge that there were resources available, and practical issues, such as needing to depend on the perpetrating spouse for income, were major obstacles to help-seeking. Having varied and multi-national legal jurisdictions has complicated the matter for Palestinian women, who are legislated under Jordanian, Egyptian, Israeli, and Palestinian Authority structures (some defined by historical Ottoman mandates), as none of these authorities have defined clear structures for relief or justice for domestic violence victims (Baldi, 20).

While the negative impact of domestic violence on victims, children, families, and communities is well documented in Palestine (Okasha, 2004; Abu Lughod, 2010; Bdier & Mohamid, 2021; Thabat et al., 2015), potential remedies have been less investigated. It has been established

that reliance on spiritual support and participating in faith-based institutions are protective factors in reducing negative mental health reactions in the face of political violence in Palestine (Mohamid & Berte, 2021). However, using sacred texts or faith-based perspectives as a preventative methodology at the personal or community level is a novel approach that needs to be explored.

Similar to other indigenous communities that have suffered displacement, injustice, and manipulation from foreign forces that retain power over their lands, resources, and even the mental health options to resolve the trauma from those situations, Palestinians have heightened sensitivities to definitions and programming addressing human rights issues (such as domestic violence) that arrives from the very sources perpetrating violence in their community. The Palestinian Family Protection Law, which was highly promoted by international NGOs and the United Nations, despite being crafted by Palestinian activists and lawyers, appears to have fallen into this trap (Global Legal Monitor, 2019). To separate the issue of domestic violence from the *East versus West* narrative, education addressing the stance of Islam on family violence utilizing history and sacred text and making the struggle against domestic violence a Muslim issue that pertains to and has solutions in both Islam and Palestinian culture, is a clear path to moving forward.

Curriculums, such as the one introduced by the Peaceful Families Project, have the potential to create a community (civilians, religious scholars, and civil leaders) that is engaged with the elimination of family violence from a perspective not only aligned with their religious tradition and culture but born from it. These foundations should lead to higher levels of engagement in the issue, motivation and ownership for resolution, and an increased options for relief (social, economic, religious, and legal) for victims.

Possible uses of the curriculum could include the training of religious leaders and governmental ministries related to women's affairs, social welfare, and religious matters. Increasing public awareness of domestic violence as a human rights issue and promoting justice-based models of marriage and family as Islamically-prescribed could increase the understanding of the need to eliminate domestic violence as well as augment actual skills (such as communication and conflict resolution) that enhance positive family functioning. Discussions on what *sharia* law says about the oppression of women and children within their homes from a religious perspective could be encouraged, leading to increased progressive legislation in accordance with Islamic frameworks.

Using the inherent faith-based and social structures already accepted within a population, instead of focusing on international standards that are not universally embraced and seen as a foreign intrusion, can only serve to enhance the ultimate success of resulting interventions for social change. Domestic violence is an intimate social issue that must be confronted with the full force of the community and can only be eliminated when understood as the mandate of all. Islamically-based interventions can bridge the gap and move the common agenda of the elimination of family violence forward, while maintaining the belief system and respect of the culture, as the community demands.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Funding

No funding was received for this study.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the University's Research Ethics Board, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010), and the 1975 Helsinki Declaration.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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