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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: CHALLENGES FOR EGYPTIAN WOMEN

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Domestic Violence: Challenges for Egyptian Women

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Domestic violence occurs across the world in various cultures and harms countless women. It is a growing world-wide problem within households and in public spheres. It is experienced by wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of abusive men. Many Egyptian women are experiencing domestic violence. In this thesis, I investigate causes and effects of domestic violence in Egypt by tracing its emergence in historical context and examine different laws regarding domestic violence. Domestic violence has many different names such as, family violence, battering, wife beating, and domestic abuse. These terms refer to abuse by marital, common law, and dating partners, parents or other household members against another member of the household. In Egypt, religion has played a major role in the community and it has influenced people's behaviors and actions in public and private spheres. Some Muslim and Coptic Christian men misinterpret the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible to justify their behavior of abusing the females in their households. Egyptian traditions also validate that Egyptian women must obey their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Despite decades of activism to address violence against women, some people remain uneducated about domestic violence. Nevertheless, activists and NGOs continue to raise awareness about domestic violence and make Egyptian women aware of the different options they have to try and leave their abusive situation. It will take time before violence against Egyptian women disappears but there is always a new found hope that one day it will completely vanish.

Dedication

To my sister Olivia and my mother Feby, I am the woman I am today because of them. Thank you for never giving up on me and for always supporting my decisions with unconditional love.

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Introduction

Domestic violence occurs across the world in various cultures and harms countless women. It is a growing world-wide problem within households and in public spheres. It is experienced by wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of abusive men. Domestic violence is a very broad topic that is addressed and dealt with in many different forms according to people's cultures. Despite decades of activism to address violence against women, some people remain uneducated about domestic violence. Many women suffer the abuse for different reasons and lack of options. Domestic violence is an epidemic in societies with drastic and negative effects on individuals, families, and communities. Domestic violence has many different names such as, family violence, battering, wife beating, and domestic abuse. These terms refer to abuse by marital, common law, and dating partners, parents or other household members against another member of the household. Domestic violence is not limited to physical beating. It is any behavior that is intended to overpower and control another human being through the use of humiliation, fear, and physical or verbal assault. "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" is domestic violence (Said, 2011, 3).

In this thesis, I investigate domestic violence in Egypt, tracing historical, legal, and traditional factors that contribute to its emergence and persistence. My discussion begins with the rule of Mohammed Ali Pasha, followed by the period of British colonialism and its overthrow, and then traces legal transformation across the regimes of

Presidents Gamal Abel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. I also consider then the influence of the Islamic brotherhood under the administration of President Mohamed Morsi, as well as the most recent developments following the coup d'état that brought Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to power.

It is important to consider how domestic violence in Egypt is related to certain political and religious views. I will investigate different Egyptian laws and examine if the laws provide adequate protection for women, especially wives. I will also consider the role of religious tenets and interpretations associated with Islam and Coptic Christianity on individual behavior and understanding of domestic violence. Some passages in both the Quran and the Bible have been interpreted to legitimate male violence to “discipline” women in their households.

In addition to domestic violence, sexual harassment on the streets of major cities has been a growing concern in Egypt since 2005. My thesis considers various explanations for the recent increase in street harassment and raises questions about the connections between private violence against women and public violence against women. I also analyze efforts by Egyptian women and the non-governmental organizations they have formed to increase awareness of domestic violence street harassment and to devise interventions to assist those who experience domestic violence and sexual harassment.

In this thesis, I draw on the works of Lisa Pollard, Nikkie Kiddie, Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, Lama Abu-Odeh, and Paul Amar to analyze and assess competing accounts of domestic violence in Egypt. In addition, I use recent online newspaper articles, tables, and graphs to document the extensiveness of domestic violence in urban and rural areas and to identify popular beliefs about why domestic violence occurs.

Domestic violence has been addressed in the Egyptian context by many scholars. Lisa Pollard's book, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt 1805-1923*, examines Egypt during the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. During the era of British colonialism until the 1919 revolution against British rule, Pollard suggests that many middle class Egyptians adopted the domestic behavior of the British elite. She traces "the ascendance of the image of the monogamous couple, their children, and the reformed, modernized domicile as templates for discussing political transformation from the middle of the nineteenth century through the Egyptian 1919 Revolution" (Pollard, 2005, 5). Leila Ahmed, Margot Badran, and Beth Baron also investigate the experiences of Egyptian women during this era. Pollard notes that Leila Ahmed's (2005) *Women and Gender in Islam*,

places the rise of male nationalist discourse about women in the context of an environment in which changes in such issues as education, governmental structures, and the world economy led Egyptian men to think about themselves and the world around them differently...Men's domination of women, they [nationalists] argued, most clearly manifested in veiling and seclusion, had led to Egypt's social, intellectual, and political retardation (Pollard, 2005, 6).

According to Pollard, Egyptian nationalists criticized traditional gendered divisions of labor in Egypt, arguing that the limitations imposed on women impeded the nation's development. The important issues addressed by Pollard were education, government, structure and world economy that had an impact on the lives of some Egyptian men.

Pollard also calls attention to Margot Badran's assessment of feminism in Egypt during the nineteenth century.

The earliest manifestation of upper- and middle-class women's nascent 'feminist consciousness' surfaced in Egypt...Upper- and middle-class women observed how men in their families were free to innovate while they were more restricted. As women expanded their female circles, they discovered different ways that they as women- across lines of class, religion and ethnicity- were controlled. As they

imagined new lives, women began to withhold complicity in their own subordination (Pollard, 2005, 7).

As women began contrasting men's freedom with the constraints that circumscribed their own lives, they reacted against such restrictive practices. Women came to understand the powers that oppressed them and they mobilized to promote social changes that would enhance women's freedom. Citing Beth Baron's historical work, Pollard notes that "during the 1890s, the women's press became an arena in which 'female intellectuals were active agents, shifting, and weighing various ideas, absorbing some and reacting against others, and shaping their own programs'" (Pollard, 2005, 7). Women started to become their own active agents to free themselves from the domestic realm.

The shift between women and men in society arose, "over the course of the nineteenth century, the mysteries of the home began to be ascribed to a woman's activities within the public realm. In particular, veiling, segregation, and the relations between men and women in public became highly charged with negative meaning" (Pollard, 2005, 61). In earlier eras, women viewed in public had a negative connotation and women were cautioned to avoid interactions with men in public. The veil created new dynamics and responsibility for many Muslim women, who "attributed the use of the veil to honor and to the protection of women's 'dignity' but did not connect the veil to any sort of cultural degradation...all prostitutes, on the contrary, [we]re obligated to appear with a naked face" (Pollard, 2005, 62). At that point in time, the veil was not an obligation but it was a marker of respectability. Indeed, that prostitutes were prohibited from veiling designated them as women who lived beyond the bounds of respectability. This posed a problem for Coptic Christian Egyptian women because their religion does not require wearing a veil. At the turn of the twentieth century, the views on the veil took

a turn as the British occupied Egypt, “veiled women were being compared to the dead, to mummies, and to witches, illustrating the extent to which Europeans found themselves both fascinated and repulsed by women and the veil” (Pollard, 2005, 63). Women were either compared to prostitutes for being unveiled or mummies and witches for being veiled. The two extremes judge women unjustly.

Another scholar, Nikkie R. Keddie divides her book, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present*, into two sections. In the first section, she recounts the history of Middle Eastern women, “which utilizes many studies about women past and present that have appeared in recent decades to synthesize an analytic history of the subject from pre-Islamic times to the present” (Keddie, 2007, 2). In the second section, Keddie “provide[s] some of the background, context, and scholarly basis for Book One...[and] present[s] in greater detail the theoretical and historiographical ideas and controversies that underlie it” (Keddie, 2007, 2). Islam was (and remains today) the main religion in Egypt. The European colonizers critiqued the Muslim religion, “British and French rulers were highly critical of ‘Muslim’ treatment of women, but did little to advance women’s education and explicitly refrained from interfering with Muslim family law” (Keddie, 2007, 67). The colonizers’ view was not sufficient to change the Muslim family law toward women.

Moderate Islamism emerged in the Egyptian nation state. “From the late 1960s on, middle-class citizens and intellectuals increasingly leaned toward moderate Islamism...A new urban veiling began...the pro-veil discourse in Egypt and elsewhere often implied that unveiled women were responsible for male harassment of them” (Keddie, 2007, 125). As Keddie notes, the claim that “unveiled women were responsible

for male harassment,” shifts the problem of street harassment from the abusive behavior of men to the dress practices of women, a shift with particularly negative consequences for secular Muslim women who chose not to veil and for Coptic Christian women who are not required to wear veils.

This thesis includes three chapters exploring violence against women in Egypt. The first chapter defines domestic violence and traces the history of Egypt to explore the laws governing the practice pertaining to domestic violence. The second chapter examines the influence of the two religions in Egypt, Islam (majority) and Coptic Christianity (minority) on the population. It also explores the legal regulations in relation to pertinent passages in the holy books, the Quran and the Bible, and considers how religious and legal treatments of domestic violence affect Egyptian women. Sexual harassment is also addressed as a form of violence against women in the public sphere. The third chapter explores activities of several Egyptian women’s NGOs that attempt to mobilize around the violence against women. It also shares core experiences of domestic violence in Egyptian women’s daily lives. NGOs continue to raise awareness and help Egyptian women to understand that domestic violence should not be tolerated in any situation. In the conclusion, I consider prospects for the eradication of domestic violence in Egypt.

Chapter 1

Domestic Violence in Egypt: A Historical Perspective

In 1993, Egypt ratified the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which situates domestic violence in the context of public and private violence against women: “violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non- spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
2. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
3. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs (Said, 2011, 6).

The Declaration makes clear, domestic violence includes physical, sexual, and psychological abusive experiences by members of the family or members in public.

Domestic violence historically has been viewed as a private family matter that does not need the government’s involvement, although many laws passed by the state regulate the use of violence in the home. In Egypt, domestic violence is likely to occur behind closed doors, which is one of the main reasons why it is not given the same level of attention as public forms of violence. In most cases, domestic violence is considered an ugly side of intimate relations that people do not want to talk about beyond the confines of their home. Yet even the most private violence has been sanctioned by law.

The laws in Egypt have complex moorings in indigenous customs and imperial practices. The legal system is based on Islamic law and civil law. Egypt is an Islamic country and its law follows the Islamic religion, although how Islam is encoded in law and practice has changed over time. To understand the difference and influence of the laws, one must trace back the history of Egypt. In “*Modernizing Muslim Family Law: The Case of Egypt*,” Lama Abu-Odeh identifies some of the laws Egyptians needed to abide by from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. It started with the Usul al-Fiqh, “Usul al-Fiqh, meaning the “sources of jurisprudence,” is a reference to the legal theory of the famous jurist Shafi’i, written in the ninth century. The era of Usul was one in which the schools of law started to make an appearance through engaging in the legal activity of innovating rules inspired directly by the sources of the religion” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1051). A school under Usul marked the beginning of Islamic history, “this era was marked by the busy and elaborate legal activity of articulating rules of law for the first time in Islamic history...This activity of innovation is understood to have come to an end with the advent of the Taqlid era” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1053). Following the Usul era, came the Taqlid era, which lasted from the tenth to nineteenth century. “Taqlid, meaning imitation, or conformism, is the word used to describe the legal system” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1054). The Taqlid era differs from the previous era:

Muslim jurists and judges appear to have abandoned, for the most part, the religion/legal project of coming up with new rules of law directly inspired by the sources of the religion, or *ijtihad*. Rather than pursue the project of legal innovation typical of the preceding era of Usul, these jurists/judges concentrated their legal activity on consolidating the legal doctrine of the school of law they were affiliated with and to which they had deep feelings of loyalty. One followed (imitated, conformed with) the doctrine of one's school rather than attempting a fresh reading of the word of God to come up with new rules. Taqlid, one might say, is the era of the schools of law during which the doctrines of the various schools were treated as the law of the land, seriously displacing and

overshadowing the Quran and prophetic traditions as the sources of the law. The main operators in the legal system of Taqlid were the four principal Sunni schools of law, namely the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, the Maliki, and the Hanbali, each named after a historic jurist appearing in the previous era of Usul. Each school developed its own distinct legal doctrine, or madhhab, as well as its own gendarme of jurists, qadis (judges), muftis, and students (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1055).

There was different view within the four Sunni schools of law pertaining to marriage and divorce for example:

Example 1: Although the doctrine of the Hanafi School of law, unlike that of other Sunni schools, gives the woman of majority age complete freedom to marry without requiring her guardian's consent, it nevertheless gives the guardian the right to dissolve her marriage after she has married on the basis of the doctrine of kafa'a (equality). Moreover, those who belong to the Hanafi School interpret this doctrine very loosely, providing several grounds according to which the guardian can exercise his right, paradoxically giving him enormous power over the fate of the marriage.

Example 2: While the doctrine of the Maliki School of law allows the wife to request divorce on the basis of "harm," it nevertheless gives the guardian absolute freedom to marry off his daughter of majority age and treat her consent as absolutely unnecessary (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1069).

These schools-based legal code lasted to the early nineteenth century until it was terminated by the European system.

Egypt was ruled by Mohammed Ali Pasha who was of Turkish decent, from May 17, 1805 until March 2, 1848, after the decline of Taqlid system. "Ali embarked upon what he saw as a modernization project that was to transform Egypt forever. Particularly detrimental to the Taqlid legal system during this era were his efforts to centralize the state. Centralization meant that the carefully calibrated relationship between the ulama and the political ruler that was typical of the pre-modern era could no longer be maintained" (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1075). He continued to alter the legal system of Egypt, "Ali not only ravaged the ulama's financial institutions, but he also started to build an educational system to compete with and take the place of the religious one that the ulama

historically controlled. One of the components of this public law was an elaborate set of punitive (penal) legal regulations that allowed Ali to control resistance to the newly centralized state” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1077).

Following the death of Ali Pasha, during the second half of the nineteenth century, “Descendants of Ali and the ruling of Turkish elites of Egypt embarked on the project of turning Egypt into a ‘part of Europe’ ” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1081). The Ottoman elites of Istanbul continued to collaborate with the British European power resulting in the beginning of the colonization of Egypt by the British in 1882 which lasted until 1948. A year after the British settled in Egypt, they modified the court system, “In 1883, a national court system was established for the purpose of adjudicating cases among Egyptians that was modeled on the Capitulations Court System both in structure and textual foundations” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1085). New codes were passed incorporating not only the Muslim population but also the Coptic Christians, “The Code became the embodiment of universal legal liberalism applying equally to everybody; Taqlid came to be seen as expressive of sectarian specificity applying only to matters of deep interests to religious Muslim communities. In this sense, Taqlid law was now equal in status to Coptic law, which regulated the personal status affairs of Copts (the Christian community) in Egypt” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1087). Other laws were passed for the judicial system, “The 1897 Law organized the Sharia courts into three stages: Courts of Summary Justice, Courts of First Instance, and Supreme Court” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1088). At the turns of the century, feminist were on the rise asking for women’s rights.

During the first half of the 20th century, feminists pushed for legal reform of Taqlid rules that established inequality in the family. Their demands included a prohibition of polygamy, equal access to divorce for women and men, an increase in the financial rights of women, elimination of child marriage, and the end to the

legal institution of obedience within marriage. On the other hand, there were religious elites, allied over time with different religious groups, declaring every one of these demands to be an assault on a God-given right. In the middle were the secular male elites who were busily splitting the difference between the demands of the two as legislators and judges by restricting but not outlawing polygamy; adding more grounds for wives to be granted divorce, yet not equalizing access to it; and reinterpreting-and restricting the terms of the wife's obedience but not abolishing it. Unfortunately for Egyptian feminists, the light of liberal feminism remains teasingly quivering at the end of the tunnel, as it has been for decades (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1101).

One of the laws pertaining to women is for maintenance of the wife, under “Article 1 Law No. 100, maintenance, the obligation of the husband, is earned by the wife from the date of contact. Article 1, provides that the wife loses her maintenance if she leaves the house without her husband’s permission, or if she works and it is judged work involves ‘abuse of the right’ or that it is contrary to the family, provided that in both cases her husband requests she stops working” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 9). The law proceeds to protect the wife’s maintenance, but only if she obeys her husband and follows his command. The law does not consider the outcome in the instance where the wife does not obey her husband, therefore, leaving an open forum for the husband to suppress his wife.

In *Beyond the Exotic: Women’s Histories in Islamic Societies*, Amira El-Azhary Sonbol examines the history of Muslim women and the abusive experiences they face within their culture among different Muslim nations including Egypt. The collection also investigates the experiences of non-Muslim women through church records and oral histories. The Islamic laws and standards for Muslim women and men consist of:

The position of the Islamic Law on the issue of spousal abuse is in many cases vague... ‘And if a person beats a woman who is a stranger to him, shall chastise [him] severely and a fine of one akce shall be collected for each stroke.’ In this case the perpetrator will pay a fine for attacking a woman who is a stranger, yet

the condition that the woman is a stranger is indicative that a woman who may be known to the offender may be treated otherwise (El-Azhary Sonbol, 2005, 191).

In this case, men are held accountable for violence against women who are “strangers” to them, but no comparable punishment is established for physical violence used against their wives, daughters, and mothers. There are laws that relate to discipline. A law that pertains to the discipline of a wife by her husband, “Under Article 209, the husband has the right to discipline his wife for “trespasses” not punishable by hand, but the same article establishes that he cannot beat her hard under any circumstance” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 9). This law stipulates that the husband cannot beat his wife hard but implies that he can beat her, which is a form of domestic physical abuse. Hanafi’s law sides with males giving them more power than the women in the family. Establishing the fact that a husband can beat his wife just not too hard continues to undermine women’s rights in a relationship.

If the husband beats his wife, her only resort is to go to a judge and request that he be reprimanded, in case that the judge determines his exercise of his disciplinary powers is in excess, meaning he beats her too hard. The wife, under Hanafi doctrine, is not allowed to leave the house in this case, lest she be declared disobedient for leaving the house without her husband’s permission, which will result in her loss of maintenance. Thus under Hanafi doctrine, a wife can very well find herself stuck in an abusive situation, especially if she is too poor to afford leaving the house to escape her abuse (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 13).

This written doctrine gives wives very limited power but gives husbands power to take advantage of women and abuse them. In other words, the wife is limited to a judge’s ruling concerning her husband’s abuse and she is deprived of the option to leave her abusive relationship since she would be declared disobedient. Furthermore, if the judge does not rule in the wife’s favor, many times she would have to stay in the abusive relationship due to the lack of financial resources to be able to live on her own.

Additionally, “The Hanafi doctrine gave women fewer financial rights in marriage as well as less means of exit from the martial relationship. At the same time, Hanafi rules reward the husband more for his financial obligations by adding to his power in marriage” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 13). Hanafi’s doctrine condones different forms of domestic violence; physical battering, economic control, and psychological abuse. The physical battering is committed by the husband where he can beat his wife just not too hard. The wife’s economic situation limits her to staying with the abusive husband and the agony of psychological trauma that does not give her the power to overcome her situation. In addition to husbands having more control than their wives, they also have power over their daughters, “Under article 44, the father can contract the marriage of a minor daughter even by force” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 8). This stipulates that the father can marry off his daughter without her consent which is a form of violence.

For a very long period of time, Egypt was ruled by a monarchy, from Mohammad Ali Pasha followed by King Faud, succeed by King Forouk I and his son King Forouk II; however, that ended with the revolution of 1952, which overthrew both the monarchy and British occupation.

On 23 July 1952 General Mohammad Neguib, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser and Colonel Anwar Sadat led a coup of the so-called Free Officers that brought to an end to the rule of the former King Farouk. The nine men who had constituted themselves as the Committee of the Free Officers' Movement and led the 1952 Revolution were Lieutenant Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, Major Abd al Hakim Amir, Lieutenant Colonel Anwar Sadat, Major Salah Salim, Major Kamal ad Din Husayn, Wing Commander Gamal Salim, Squadron Leader Hasan Ibrahim, Major Khalid Muhi ad Din, and Wing Commander Abd al Latif al Baghdadi. Major Husayn ash Shafii and Lieutenant Colonel Zakariyya Muhi ad Din joined the committee later (Gordon, 1992, 15).

The revolution of 1952 freed the Egyptian people from British colonial rule and in a short period of time Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected president of Egypt. During his

administration (1956 – 1970), significant changes were made in the laws and politics of the Egyptian nation. The Egyptian people were freed from foreign power with the changes initiated by the new president, “the policies of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who ruled from 1956 until his death in 1970, began with state-centered nationalism and, in the 1960s – partly because of Western acts against him –moved toward socialism” (Keddie, 2007, 122). Nasser established new rules and policies that affected the women of Egypt, some in their favor while others limited their power.

One of Nasser’s laws was, “The 1956 constitution included woman suffrage and gender equality before the law and in employment and wages...He also passed progressive labor laws, giving legal rights and special protection to working women, including paid maternity leave, breaks for mother of infants, and day care, to facilitate the entrance of mothers into the labor force” (Keddie, 2007, 123). This law gave women the opportunity to work outside their homes, care for their infants, and pay for child care. Nasser was praised for empowering women and mothers to move into the workplace. However, he did not change the vigorous role of males in the Egyptian society. “In 1967 the Egyptian Family Planning Association was put under the Ministry of Social Affairs. The regime did not question family structure, patriarchal power and culture, or religious family law. Men continued to dominate the family, the workplace, and the government. Feminist organizations...were prohibited [to exist] from 1954” (Keddie, 2007, 123). Patriarchy remained entrenched in the transition from colonialism to nationalism. Focusing on the domination in the family, males remained the heads of the households and were the superior figures. This may be the reason why domestic violence against women is not taken up in the public sphere.

In 1970, Nasser suffered a heart attack and was replaced by Anwar Sadat, his vice-president, “The presidency of Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) reflected a major shift in the way the state defined its relationship to religious and Islamic groups...he freed the members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were imprisoned by the previous regime” (El-Azhary Sonbol, 2005, 314). This was the beginning of the freedom of the Muslim Brotherhood, which affected Egypt’s state and in recent years resurfacing when Mohamed Morsi came into power. We must trace back to the start of the Muslim Brotherhood to understand why Nasser banned them but Sadat lifted the ban, “Of all the Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood has the broadest base, with a membership of about half a million and a formidable political machine [which was] founded in 1928” (Gerges, 2011, 28). The Muslim brother were supportive of Nasser but their support did not last, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood initially supported Gamal Abdel Nasser's secular government and cooperated with it, but resisted left-wing influences. A Muslim Brother assassinated Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi Nokrashi on December 28, 1948. The Brotherhood was banned, and Muslim Brother Hassan al-Banna himself was killed by government agents in Cairo in February 1949” (The Muslim Brotherhood, 2012, 2). After a few year of their reinstatement, the Muslim Brotherhood was to be banned under Nasser reign, “Muslim Brother Abdul Munim Abdul Rauf allegedly tried to kill Nasser on October 26, 1954. The Brotherhood was outlawed again and more than 4,000 of its members were imprisoned” (The Muslim Brotherhood, 2012, 2). As president of Egypt, Nasser became unsupportive of the Muslim Brotherhood, “Successive governments suppressed the Brothers, culminating in a systemic campaign by the pan-Arab nationalist president Gamal Abdel Nasser to dismantle the organization and defeat it. Thousands of

rank-and-file members were incarcerated and tortured and top leaders executed” (Gerges, 2011, 29). Not until Sadat became president of Egypt was the ban lifted from the Muslim Brotherhood. Sadat wanted to change the Nasser ideology, “Sadat felt that Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood could counterbalance the unwanted influence of the Nasserite and Leftist elements that had joined support when Nasser had been alive... Under Sadat’s rule, the Brotherhood was able to expand their membership into the established middle class, which had been all but decimated by Nasser” (The Brotherhood and Sadat, 2012, 1). At that point in time, the Muslim Brotherhood favored Sadat, “Sadat was turning into a savior for the Brotherhood, as his image as the ‘believer president’ provided the Brotherhood the legitimacy to operate more openly. It is at this point that the Muslim Brotherhood had to decide what their political aspirations are” (The Brotherhood and Sadat, 2012, 2). The brotherhood became distinct from Sadat because of his political position to cooperate with Israel, “Sadat arrested many when student activists began to denounce his rule” (A Look at Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, 2013, 3). A few years later, Sadat regime would come to an end, “Anwar Sadat would be assassinated on October 6, 1981 by what some believe to be ex-members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sadat’s death would herald in a new era of political participation for the Brotherhood, as well as political oppression under Hosni Mubarak” (The Brotherhood and Sadat, 2012, 3). The Muslim Brotherhood was in constant battles with freedom and imprisonment, “They were later freed by Mubarak, under [his rule], the group made forays into parliamentary elections, although the regime's rigid control and vote-rigging ensured opposition victories were minimal. It was allowed to run candidates under recognized opposition political parties in the mid- 1980s. In the early 1990s, it performed

strongly in union elections, winning control of the leadership of several unions. Mubarak lashed back, suspending union leaderships and arresting Brotherhood members” (A Look at Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, 2013, 3). Nevertheless, “The organization did not participate actively in the protests that drove Mubarak from power, but it has mobilized its followers ever since in a newly formed political party, Freedom and Justice.

Positioning themselves as a voice for the poor, a huge constituency representing almost half of Egypt's 82 million people, the Brotherhood aims to win 40 per cent of the seats in parliamentary elections” (Gerges, 2011, 28). Once again, the Brotherhood gained their freedom, “Soon after Mubarak fell on February 11, 2011, the military rulers who took power lifted the ban. It quickly formed its first political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, initially led by Morsi” (A Look at Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, 2013, 3).

During the Sadat Administration, the driving force for women's advocacy was his wife Jihan Sadat. One of the laws he passed was named after her. “During the administration of President Anwar Sadat, Law No. 44 was passed hastily by the Egyptian parliament in an attempt to improve women's legal status. It was referred to by some Egyptians as "Jihan's law," a reference to the efforts of the first lady, Mrs. Sadat in having it passed. Jihan's law, passed in 1979, gave women a voice against the men in society, “which required the husband to register his divorce and to inform his wife of it, gave the wife a claim to larger alimony and child support, lengthened the period children spent in maternal custody and gave women the right to retain the conjugal home if they could prove they had nowhere else to go” (Hassan, 2000, 1). Women suffered economic abuse of staying in a relationship because they did not have the financial resources to leave, but with Jihan's law, giving women a larger amount for alimony and child support,

this gave women the opportunity to leave and have a better life. If it was not for Jihan Sadat advocating for all women of Egypt, would that law have ever passed?

Unfortunately, that law was rejected soon after the death of President Sadat” (al-Hibri, 2001, 2).

According to the World Fact Book, Egypt has a population over 82 million people. Of these 90% identify as Muslim (predominantly Sunni); the remaining 10% include various Christian sects. Although the majority of these Christians are Coptic Orthodox, other Christians include Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Maronite, Orthodox, and Anglican (The Central Intelligence Agency of the United States, 2014, 5). In 1980, Sadat passed a new constitution that declared Sharia law, the main source of Egyptian legislation. The Sharia Law enforces the Islamic religion in its strictest sense. In the Sharia, Article 2 states, “Islam is the Religion of the State, Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)” (Egypt's Constitution). Egypt’s majority is populated by Muslims but this was the first time that it was publicly announced that Egypt is an Islamic state discriminating against non-Muslims. “Article 2 introduced by President Sadat in 1971 to create an Islamic base for himself...Ever since, this article was used by authorities, including the judicial system, to discriminate against non-Muslims, especially Copts, despite the fact that other articles in the same constitution gives all the freedom of religion" (JNS World News, 2013, 1). As women fight for their rights as equal citizens, Coptic women face the double standard which creates more hardships for Coptic Christian women.

Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by members of the Islamic brotherhood which resulted in Hosni Mubarak taking the presidency.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, the Egyptian state has increasingly treated women as second-class citizens. A 1980 amendment to Egypt's 1971 constitution, passed under President Anwar Sadat, established "principles of Islamic law" as "the principal source of legislation." The constitution privileged a woman's "duties toward her family" and her role within Islamic jurisprudence. Women also faced harsher legal penalties for committing adultery. The constitution expressed broader social shifts in Egypt toward religious conservatism, which included attempts by the state to control women and sexual mores (Dyer, 2014, 2).

In Egyptian society, women were viewed as second-class citizens who did not receive the full rights of their male counterparts. Sadat released all Muslim Brotherhood prisoners and they pressured him to implant the Sharia as the main law of Egypt. Mubarak amended Sadat's laws for women, "President Anwar Sadat issued a decree allowing women to divorce her husband if she objected to him taking an additional wife. Mr. Mubarak did not try to restore that law, but did repeal an Ottoman-era rule making it a crime for a women to run away from an abusive husband" (Sachs, 2000, 2). In other words, women who left their abusive husbands were no longer considered criminals.

The same year Mubarak assumed leadership, Egypt ratified "The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), joining fifty other nations. CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is often described as an international bill of rights for women" (UN Women). This was an exceptional step towards women's rights; however, the fault in that step was the fact the Egypt did not abide by all the different Articles of the CEDAW because it conflicted with the Islamic law. The CEDAW Article 9 (2) and 16 which gave women equality:

The reservation to Article 16 (equality in marriage and divorce) cites Sharia and invokes the principles of equivalence and complementarity, whereby women are accorded rights equivalent to those of their spouses so as to ensure a just balance between them. This is out of respect for the sacrosanct nature of the firm religious beliefs which govern marital relations in Egypt and which may not be called in question and in view of the fact that one of the most important bases of these relations is an equivalency of rights and duties so as to ensure

complementary which guarantees true equality between the spouses. The provisions of the Sharia lay down that the husband shall pay bridal money to the wife and maintain her fully and shall also make a payment to her upon divorce, whereas the wife retains full rights over her property and is not obliged to spend anything on her keep. The Sharia therefore restricts the wife's rights to divorce by making it contingent on a judge's ruling, whereas no such restriction is laid down in the case of the husband. The reservation makes no reference to the family law of the Coptic Christian minority (Freeman, 2009, 15).

However, there was a law passed when Mubarak served as president which was in favor of women, “In 2000 a new law was adopted, nominally to facilitate women’s initiation of divorce under the *Khula* procedure. *Khula* is one of the very few avenues for women to initiate divorce (while men have an unlimited right to unilateral divorce). It allows women to seek a divorce from a court by agreeing to pay the husband a certain amount of money and to forego all other financial rights such as post-divorce maintenance” (Freeman, 2009, 15). Many times the husband would not agree to divorce the wife, when she asked for a divorce. Some of the different reasons as to why the husband would reject his wife’s request for divorce were because he would have to pay her alimony or he just simply did not want to grant her wishes because he wanted to demonstrate his control. The *Khula* offered an option for women to “buy” their way out of a marriage; however, to comply with the law, a woman had to have the economic resources to pay her husband for the court to grant the divorce. Women did not have financial resources in many cases because the husband was the breadwinner of the family and that drawback could cause the wife to remain in that marriage. Perhaps, if the *Khula* law allowed women to divorce without financial obligations, it would have been feasible for women to escape an abusive marriage. Nevertheless, the idea of *Khula* is exceptional for women but it was very difficult for women to be granted the *Khula*, “After *Khula* was approved by Egyptian court in 2000...Of 5,000 cases brought before the court, only 122 were

approved” (Hamada, 2010,1). The court did not grant many women the divorce and they had to stay in their marriages.

The Egyptian people continue to make history. In recent years, there were protests and the ousting of President Mubarak who reigned over Egypt for 31 years. In 2011, Egypt witnessed its second major revolution within the last 60 years. On January 25, 2011; Egyptian people of all ages and genders came together to make history, “Activists in Egypt called for an uprising in their own country, to protest against poverty, unemployment, government corruption and the rule of president Hosni Mubarak, who has been in power for three decades...chanting "Down with Mubarak" (Aljazeeraa, 2012, 1). This was a major event for the Egyptian people because they have been suffering decades of corrupt government and it was time to fight for their rights to employment, anti-poverty, and women’s rights. The revolution not only gave voice to the Egyptian males but also gave women opportunity for their voices to be heard, there were “hundreds of women, sleeping in Tahrir Square to physically protect it from the Mubarak-government forces trying to take it back” (Danahar, 2012, 1). Unfortunately, that came with a price of violence against women. Some men did not focus only on ousting Mubarak; they took advantage of women being there and violated them. “Gangs of men were preying on young women like packs of animals; stripping them naked, sexually assaulting and then dumping them in the gutter” (Danahar, 2012, 1). Some of the examples that were reported stated, “16-year-old Eman Mostafa spat at the man who groped her breasts, her attacker shot her dead” (Trew, 2013, 2). A woman reporter in Tahrir Square wrote, “I was groped and another colleague almost had her pants ripped off by a gang of thugs...I was walking home from dinner recently when a carload of young men raced by me and

screamed out "Sharmouta" (whore in Arabic)" (Rogers, 2011, 1). The sexual harassment epidemic grew in Egypt, "CBS war correspondent Lara Logan said she was raped on the night of February 11 while she was covering the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Sexual harassment has become part of daily life for Egyptian women in the street and they are often blamed for it by men who say they bring it upon themselves with the way they dress or walk. Last February, preacher Ahmad Mahmoud Abdullah said that women protesting in Tahrir Square 'have no shame and want to be raped'" (Rogers, 2011, 1). This should have been the time that males and females join together in peace, since they have the same objectives; gaining rights from their corrupt government. The protests did not have an immediate effect on President Mubarak, who declared that he is not leaving the presidency. However, the violence continued and on February 11, 2011, Mubarak resigned and was replaced by military officers who established an interim government.

In the first election following the ouster of Mubarak, on June 24, 2012, Mohamed Morsi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, was declared president of Egypt, which brought Egypt to renewed dedication to enforce Sharia law. During his campaign and a month before he took the presidency seat, Morsi gave a speech in Cairo on May 13, 2012 in which he declared:

The Quran is our constitution. The Prophet Muhammad is our leader. Jihad is our path. And death for the sake of Allah is our most lofty aspiration." Then, Morsi proclaimed: "This nation will enjoy blessing and revival only through the Islamic Sharia [law]." He added: "I take an oath before Allah and before you all that regardless of the actual text [of the current Egyptian constitution], Allah willing, the text will truly reflect Sharia law, as will be agreed upon by the Egyptian people, by the Islamic scholars, and by legal and constitutional experts. Rejoice and rest assured that these people will not accept a text that does not reflect the true meaning of the Islamic Sharia as a text to be implemented and as a platform. The people will not agree to anything else (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2013, 1).

As the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi was committed to implementing the Sharia law as the new constitution of Egypt. He did not account for Christians in this law; Christians do not follow the Islamic religion law and never had to until Morsi tried enforcing it. The Quran is the holy book that most Muslims abide by; however, the Sharia represents a particular interpretation of Islam, which is not accepted by many Muslims.

Morsi and his followers were determined to follow the Sharia (Islamic law), which is not only against Christian's rights but also against women's rights. The government changed rapidly once Morsi was in office, "If you [looked] at the Parliament in Egypt and see that 70% of it is Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi, you can make the argument that we now have people in politics who do not believe in women's rights" (Danahar, 2012, 2). The Salafi are a version of Islam, heavily funded by the government of Saudi Arabia, who adopt a particularly harsh interpretation of Sharia law. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi were not concerned with women's rights; they only wanted to implement the Sharia law in the quickest way possible. The Salafis have always been a part of Egypt but they broke out of prison term after the 2011 Revolution, "The term Salafism refers to an interpretation of Islam that seeks to restore Islamic faith and practice to the way they existed at the time of Muhammad and the early generations of his followers. Since this early period represented the golden age of Islam in its pure form, Salafis believe it should be the example followed by all Muslims today" (Brown, 2011, 3). In other words, the Salafis wanted to backtrack through time to the Prophet Muhammad and his teachings. Nevertheless, this is based on their interpretation of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet because religion does not teach violence against

women or any individual from a different religion. If the Sharia was implanted, many would suffer, “if applied at all, in modern Islam’s derivation of Sharia, which tends to be repressive, discriminatory (especially of women) and unforgiving of miscreants and lawbreakers. Sharia means “no music, no liquor, no smoking, and no female emancipation” (Dunahar, 2012, 2). According to the Sharia, “A woman needs to be confined within a framework that is controlled by the man of the house.” Osama Yehia Abu Salama, a Brotherhood family expert states, “Even if a wife were beaten by her husband, show her how she had a role in what happened to her.” “If he is to blame, Mr. Abu Salama added, she shares 30 percent or 40 percent of the fault” (Kirkpatrick, 2013, 1). Women are not only viewed as second class citizens to their husbands, but that they should be controlled by the husband. Men do not believe that a husband beating his wife is domestic violence against women because the husband has the “right” to show his wife her wrong doing by beating her. In addition, wives are to take partial responsibilities for the violence even if the husband was wrong. The violence against wives is not viewed as domestic violence or wrong doing by the Muslim Brotherhood. What’s more, the brotherhood strongly discriminated against wives, “Brotherhood said that wives should not have the right to file legal complaints against their husbands for rape, and husbands should not be subject to the punishments meted out for the rape of a stranger” (Kirkpatrick, 2013, 1). All forms of domestic violence would not be valid according to the Muslim Brotherhood, a husband can beat his wife (physical abuse), rape her (sexual abuse), and she cannot leave (economical and psychological abuse). The Sharia favors the husbands and gives the husband the power over his wife and daughter(s), “A husband must have “guardianship” over his wife, not an equal “partnership” with her, the group

declared. Daughters should not have the same inheritance rights as sons. Nor should the law cancel “the need for a husband’s consent in matters like travel, work or use of contraception” (Kirkpatrick, 2013, 1). Within the Sharia law, women would not be considered equal partners within a marriage because the husband has guardianship over his wife and must approve the wife’s travel, work, and use of contraception. Wives and daughters are also not considered equal to husbands and sons; males are superior and in control of the fates of their women.

Nevertheless, women were not the only citizens facing difficulties, Christian males and females faced many forms of discrimination under proposals of the Muslim Brotherhood, “Salafis were involved in many ugly incidents, including the demolishing of Sufi shrines in several locations, the May 7 clash between Muslims and Christians around the Virgin Mary Church in Imbaba, Cairo, and the Nur mosque incident in Abbasiyya, Cairo in April” (Brown, 2011, 7). The violence was brutal and concluded in the death of many. Many Egyptians were not pleased with the rule of president Morsi along with his Muslim Brotherhood followers. Egyptians gathered again in Tahrir Square demanding the ouster of Morsi. As in the 2011 revolution, women were harassed and violated in public; some men did not show any mercy. Some women were raped and assaulted in public, “Human Rights Watch estimated that at least 500 women were sexually assaulted by mobs in Egypt between 2011 and 2014, in what it describes as an “epidemic” of sexual violence against women” (Mcrobie, 2014, 2). This public form of violence against women proved that violence does not only take place in the privacy of homes.

On June 3, 2013, “General Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, the Egyptian defense minister, ousted Mr. Morsi by force, and suspended the Constitution, installed an interim government, insisting he was responding to the millions of Egyptians who had opposed the Islamist agenda of Mr. Morsi and his allies in the Muslim Brotherhood” (New York Times, 2013, 2). Once again sexual harassment of women was taking place during the 2013 revolution. At this point in history the number of violators rose, “Sexual harassment has become a widespread phenomenon in Egypt with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women publishing a report on 28 April 2013 suggesting that 99.3% of Egyptian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment” (Abou-Bakr, 2013, 3). That report demonstrates that almost the entire populations of Egyptian women have experienced or are experiencing public form of harassment.

On “June 8, 2014 Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi was sworn in as president of Egypt” (New York Times, 2014, 1). The Egyptian government, “is working with all its powers and policies to stop all forms of violence against women” (Kirkpatrick, 2013, 1). President El-Sisi started to pass laws concerning violence against women. The reason for the law being passed was because his military had partaken in the violence against women prior to El-Sisi becoming president, “In 2011 El-Sisi himself defended virginity tests on female detainees which were being imposed to 'protect' them from rape and soldiers and officers from allegations of rape. 24 year-old Samira Ibrahim filed a court case against the military leaders when she was arrested at a sit-in in Tahrir Square in 2011, beaten, given electric shocks, strip-searched and given virginity tests whilst being videotaped. Al-Sisi's comments cast doubt on his intentions to take the issue of sexual harassment seriously”

(Smith, 2014, 1). The new law defined sexual harassment in the public and private spheres.

The new law penalizes offenders with a minimum of six months in jail and an LE 3,000 fine and doubles the jail term and fine for re-offenders. It also precisely defines sexual harassment. The law previously used in rare cases to indict harassers was article 268 of the penal code that laid down the punishment for “sexual assault,” more limited in its definition. Roughly translated, the new law defines a sexual harasser as someone who “accosts others in a public or private place through following or stalking them, using gestures or words or through modern means of communication or in any other means through actions that carry sexual or pornographic hints (El Sharnoubi, 2013, 1).

Before domestic violence cases were not taken seriously but now offenders will face jail time and a fine.

On June 9, 2014, 25 Egyptian rights groups called for a comprehensive law on violence against women and a national strategy to implement such legislation. In response to the recent attacks, the Interior Ministry reported arrests of seven men, and the public prosecution opened an investigation into three other men. On June 10, President Sisi told the Interior minister to “take all necessary measures to combat sexual harassment.” The following day, he paid a visit to a hospitalized victim of a sexual attack, accompanied by television cameras, during which he apologized to her and promised to hold the attackers accountable (Human Rights Watch, 2014, 1).

President El-Sisi is taking action and reaching out to the women who are experiencing violence. He is the first president to visit a victim of a sexual harassment crime. Women can now feel that the law is on their side and they can report sexual harassment situations because there are laws against it. President El-Sisi is concerned about women’s rights and he is actively working toward making Egypt a safer place for women in the public and private spheres. “President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi told the Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab on June 11, 2014 to form a committee to address harassment. The committee is a positive step, but effective, comprehensive action needs to follow,” Human Rights Watch said (Committee Assessment Should Lead to Reforms, 2014, 1). This is a start of women

being able to turn to the government for support and this might be the beginning of many new laws that will help women escape their violent homes and have a bright future.

Chapter 2
Religious Teachings and Traditional Practices
(1980-2014)

Egypt has a population of over 82 million people who classify themselves as members of one of the two main religions. Ninety percent identify themselves as Muslim (predominantly Sunni); the remaining ten percent include various Christian sects (Coptic Orthodox majority). Muslims and Christians share many traditional Egyptian values but different religious standards. Over the last 35 years, it has become apparent to the population that religion has played a major role in the Egyptian community and it has influenced people's behaviors and actions in public and private spheres. Over these years, some women experience violence in the name of religion while some men justify these violent behaviors according to their definition of religion.

Religion has always played a significant role in the Egyptian culture, Muslims follow the teaching of the Holy Quran and Christians follow the Holy Bible. Muslims are taught to obey the teaching of the Quran but men interpret it according to their liking. There is a verse in the Quran that refers to a legitimate context for beating women:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property). As to those women on whose party you see ill conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful), but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance) (The Holy Quran, An-Nisa, 34).

This verse suggests that it is appropriate for a man to beat his disobedient wife because he is following the Quran and that he would be punished by Allah if he disobeys his writing. The Quran is interpreted in a literal sense and gives males the power to discipline women even through force. However, the Quran does not list the actions that women should be beaten for; therefore, some men take it upon themselves to define the actions according to their pleasing and justify their actions by stating that they are following their religious teachings. Here is another example of a man misinterpretation of the Quran:

The misuse of the Qur'anic text to dismiss the abuse of women in the family sphere is evidenced in a newspaper report of a father's treatment of his daughter. The article, headed 'The Humane Decision By The Niyaba: The Release of a Father Who Tortured His Daughter' stated that the Sahel Niyaba, in a humane decision, released a carpenter on bail. The defendant had chained and tortured his daughter for several days for leaving the house without his permission. The mother reported her husband to the police who arrived to find the daughter bleeding from various parts of her body after being handcuffed for days. The carpenter confessed, and the case was moved to the Niyaba. The Niyaba released him 'to protect family relations' (al-Akhbar, October 6, 1996).

In addition, the Quran does not authorize killing a woman if she engages in misconduct. Benninger-Budel, however, reports occasions when women have been murdered by husbands and family members, "In September 1998, a girl was murdered by her bother because of a rumor. Her body was displayed for all to see. In October, a husband murdered his wife and children because of doubts regarding her 'behavior'" (Benninger-Budel, 2001, 23). Behavior is in quotation marks because it is not clear what the woman had done to be murdered.

As the Quran is interpreted to side with males, so is the bible. The Bible is also taken out of context concerning the topic of the superiority of the male. There are verses in the bible that ask women to submit to their husbands but does not literally approve a man inflicting violence on a woman. In the New Testament, the bible states, "Wives,

submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (*Ephesians 5:22-24, KJV*). In other words, the verse in the bible can be interpreted as the wife must submit, do, and accept everything her husband inflicts on her. Christian women often feel compelled to stay in abusive relationships by scripture instructing them to "submit to their husbands." Therefore, the husbands believe that the wife is their property because the wife and everything she owns physically and emotionally “belong” to the husband. This eliminates the wife’s character as an individual and it is supported by the Egyptian society and the Christian religion. The pressure on women remains for the wife to be obedient, “social and interpretations of religious values reinforce the wife’s duty to obey and serve her husband...[and] also perpetuates idea that a wife is her husband’s property” (Benninger-Budel, 2001, 20). A human being should not be identified as another person’s property especially a wife to her husband because the commencement of marriage should unite the husband and wife as one (as equals). But some men believe that their wives must be passive and that they have the “right” to punish their wives in any form, if their wives refuse their commands. Some men are translating the bible and the Quran to justify their abusive actions towards women.

Discipline and submission are mentioned in Bible verses which cause some Coptic males to interpret it as male superiority. For example, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, women are labeled as inferior to men, “the husband has authority to discipline the wife. The wife does not have authority to discipline her husband” (Genesis 3:16- The Old Testament). “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I

do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (1 Timothy 2:11-12- The New Testament). To have “authority to discipline the wife,” can mean any form of action taken by the husband is excused according to the religious belief but not only can the husband have full control, the wife is to remain silent because she does not have any form of authority. This is not practiced by all Coptic Christians; it is only implemented by those who misinterpret the Bible. Religion is used for some as an excuse to influence the law and brand the male authority as a normal part of society, “it is often imbedded in concepts of gender and the role of men and women that are considered the ‘norm’ in a given culture at a given time, and it is manifested in efforts to exert power and control over women’s bodies and lives” (Habib, 2009, 1). In other words, according to religion and society, women do not exert any form of power over a male and not even over their own bodies and lives.

It is important to examine the different religious customs that applied to Egyptian women. Some of the traditions apply both to Muslims and Christians, for example the *Shabka* (a gift of rings or gold jewelry) applies to both, while Christians do not abide by the Muslim law of dowry (money given to the to-be-wife before marriage).

There are different religious variables that differ around the subject of marriage and divorce. “Marriage in Egypt typically takes place in stages that involve special and often costly ceremonies. Related marriage costs often include: The *Shabka* (or “tying”) of the couple with a gift of rings or gold; The dowry, partly paid for at the time of the marriage, with the rest held in reserve for settlement in case of divorce; Housing for the couple to live in and furniture and appliances for the newlyweds (Singerman, 2001, 80).

These costly marriage traditions become a problem for young adults and result in Urfi marriages between couples. In the Islamic religion Urfi marriages were created, this is a piece of paper written by a man and woman declaring that they are married. “Egyptian

society forbids sex before marriage; so many young people consider the 'Urfi marriage a solution'. Urfi marriages are conducted by a Muslim cleric in the presence of two witnesses. However, they are not officially registered and are not financially binding to the man. The Urfi is a marriage without an official contract. Couples repeat the words, "We got married" and pledge commitment before God" (Allam, 2000, 1).

Customary "Urfi" marriages are not prohibited, yet provide women with no rights: husbands have no obligations to financially support wives... If the husband destroys the marriage document, women can be accused of sexual relations outside of marriage; and fathers often refuse to recognize the children of such marriages. Partly due to the financial costs of marriage, customary marriages have dramatically increased over recent years (FIDH, 2014, 50).

Muslim women face many problems within Urfi marriages. Since Urfi marriage is just a piece of paper between a man and a woman, it can be destroyed with simply ripping the paper. This can result in Egyptian women losing their virginity out of wedlock and risking their family knowing about it. If the husband denies that he was ever married to that woman by Urfi, she can be beaten and abused by her family since there would be no evidence that she was truly married. Even if the women are able to prove to their families that they were married Urfi, the abuse would still take place because Urfi marriages are looked down upon since they are performed without the families' consent. Another issue that arises with Urfi marriages is if the woman gives birth and the father refuses to acknowledge that the child is his, then the woman is looked down upon by society and suffers physical and emotional abuse by her family. In addition, "The 'Urfi marriage can be disastrous for the wife because if the husband leaves her without granting her a divorce, she had no legal right to seek a divorce since Urfi marriage was considered illegal under the old status law. While her husband could remarry, the wife is in a more difficult position. If the wife remarries, she could be accused of polyandry

which is punishable by seven years in prison in Egypt. The alternative course of action is for her to remain single for the rest of her life” (Allam, 2000, 1). Therefore, Urfi marriages create problems and complications for women. “The Egyptian government did not recognize Urfi marriages until the year 2000 and the paper from the marriage could be used only to prove the relationship in court. A woman could not get a divorce since the government did not recognize the marriage in the first place. Under the new personal status law passed on January 29, 2000 however, divorces from Urfi marriages are now recognized” (Allam, 2000, 1). There is not enough data to determine whether Urfi marriages are or are not on the rise; because, “The number of Urfi marriages annually was not available from the notary public to determine if it is increasing since it became more popular in the mid-1990s. But the number of traditional marriages has declined overall, from 592,000 in 2000 to 506,000 in 2006, according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics” (Carroll, 2007, 3). Therefore, since traditional marriages are on the decline that might be because Urfi marriages are on the rise, but unless we have the data reported, we cannot speculate the causes.

The topic of divorce differs for both Muslims and Christians. Within Islam, divorce is simplified for men but women must go through the court.

Men can divorce their wives (*talaq*) by saying “I repudiate you” 3 times and registering the announcement at a religious notary office within 30 days (PSL, amended in 1985). Women are required to go before a court and prove one of the following grounds: the husband’s illness, including mental illness or impotence; failure to provide maintenance or financial support; absence or imprisonment; or harmful behavior, such as mental or physical abuse. Since 2000, women can also seek a no-fault divorce under the *khula* procedure, on the condition that they return the dowry (PSL, as amended in 2000) (FIDH, 2014, 51).

Muslim men can divorce their wives by repeating *talaq* three times, which puts many women in fear that they must do as the husband wishes or they risk hearing *talaq* at any

given point in their marriage. This law presents a bias where Islam can side with husbands over wives. Islam does not allow wives to simply divorce their husbands by repeating talaq three times but that they must go in front of the court and plead their case as to why they are seeking divorce from their husbands. Not only are wives required to appear in front of the court to ask for a divorce but they must prove one of the following reasons, “the husband’s illness, including mental illness or impotence; failure to provide maintenance or financial support; absence or imprisonment; or harmful behavior, such as mental or physical abuse” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1050), in hope that the court would grant them a divorce. If the wives are not able to prove any of the above reasons, they would have to remain in the marriage until they find a way to prove it. On the other hand, husbands can divorce their wives without a reason. This presents an aspect of discrimination against women in Islam. On the contrary, there was a khula law passed in 2000, where a wife can divorce the husband but she must return the dowry, “The mahr [dowry] is paid to the bride herself, not to her father or any other party” (Abu-Odeh, 2004, 1051). This law is both helpful and harmful to women, especially women of low income. The khula law gives women the power to divorce their husbands, especially if they are in an abusive relationship without having to provide evidence of abuse in court. However, giving back the dowry can create complications of leaving the marriage because the wife may not have the money to give back or any income to live on her own. In addition, this shows unfairness for women because the husband had paid this amount as part of the dowry for the wife to keep. Unfortunately, many women would rather pay the price and give back the money in order for them to leave a harmful marriage.

Unlike Islam, Coptic Christianity has been on the topic of marriage and divorce. In the Coptic Christian religion, husbands and wives could seek divorce only in cases involving adultery. Therefore, if a husband is physically, sexually, emotionally abusing his wife, she would have to remain in the marriage because domestic violence is not discussed as a relevant topic to grant a divorce. In addition, a divorced Coptic Christian woman is looked down upon in the Christian community regardless of the situation. “In 1962, Pope Kyrillos VI (1959-1971) added the second reason of conversion and instructed then Bishop Shenouda to draft a new code based on the biblical teachings. Upon becoming pope in 1971, he issued a papal decree confirming that the Orthodox Church only granted a divorce in cases of adultery and conversion” (van Doorn-Harder, 2013, 15). Married Christian’s couples can only seek divorce within the church in cases of adultery or conversion to another religion but any other situation was not taken into account. Copts are more restricted than Muslims in seeking divorce because it can only be granted through the church. Although divorce in the Coptic Christian religion was generally not allowed except for adultery, in 2008 the law was amended, “According to the 2008 law on Coptic Christian marriages, divorce is allowed for men as well as women, on the 10 stated grounds set out in the Law of 1938” (FIDH, 2014, 51). “Copts do have the option to seek a divorce via the Egyptian civil courts, but the Church will not recognize it and only allows remarrying in a church ceremony if the divorce is based on adultery or when one of the spouses converts to another religion” (van Doorn-Harder, 2013, 14). Today, Copts are not settling for these two reasons only to be granted a divorce from the church. “The election of Pope Tawadros II, the debate about what to accept as valid reasons for a divorce is far from solved and features prominently on the

Pope's agenda. He has called it 'a headache' (Interview, January 24, 2013)" (van Doorn- Harder, 2013, 16). Perhaps, the issue can be addressed and more reasons can be acceptable to grant a divorce from the church. Domestic violence is one of the most important reasons for which women should be seeking divorce, and more Egyptian women should be voicing their opinion on this matter.

Even though Muslims and Christians have different rules and laws, domestic violence is experienced by some women of both religions. Marital rape is one of the forms of violence that some married women experience but the alarming part is that many women do not view it as rape. Therefore, very limited data is recorded and available to access. The example below demonstrates a sample of the few reported instances.

In 1999, religion was examined in an Egyptian study that asked 75 married couples whether marital rape exists or if it is a man's right to have sex with his wife at any time. Of the female respondents, 67 percent of Muslims and 55 percent of Christians believed their husbands had the right to have sexual relations with them whenever they wish. However, based only on the age of the respondents, 75 percent of the women below the age of 20 disagreed with the concept of the husband's absolute right. The same study found that women in arranged marriages were more likely to experience marital rape (Al-Semary, 1999, 24).

There is a fine line of what is considered domestic violence in Egyptian marriages. "15 years ago, more than half the population of Muslim and Christian women did not consider marital rape as a form of sexual violence" (Al-Semary, 1999, 24) because women believed that it is their husband's right to have sexual intercourse whenever they wish. However, younger women, below the age of 20 as Al- Semary states, would agree that marital rape is a form of domestic violence and it should not be a husband's right.

Reporting statistics about domestic violence in Egypt is very difficult and problematic because many forms of violence are not considered illegal. One of them being marital rape, “In Egypt, spousal rape is not illegal. The law prohibits non-spousal rape and punishment ranges from three years to life imprisonment; however, spousal rape is not illegal,” reported in 2006 (US State Department country report for Egypt, 2006, 1). As women are treated as second class citizens, the law does not condemn marital rape or view it as a form of domestic violence. Just as the law does not convict the husband for raping his wife, religion does the same. The Bible states, “The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband” (1 Corinthians 7:4, NIV). Therefore, some Coptic men believe that the wife’s body is for the husband’s pleasing.

Not only does religion play a large role in society, old traditions and customs still exist and are rigorously practiced. One of the most important Egyptian traditions among Muslims and Christians is for a woman to remain a virgin until marriage. This tradition has always been and is kept until today, “Unlike men, women’s sexual activity usually starts with marriage; society approves a man’s right to have sex before marriage but firmly rejects the same right for women. This stand reflects the social concept that virginity is closely related to family honor and to the women’s future fidelity to her husband” (Welchman, 2004, 27). This demonstrates the double standard women face in the Egyptian society. Unmarried non-virgins face discrimination and abuse from society and their families. “Since losing virginity is considered a disgrace to the woman’s family, she often becomes a victim of domestic abuse” (Suleiman, 2008, 1). It is very difficult for non-virgins to marry because of the stigma she would have to live with if anyone finds out what she did. Women who are sexually active before marriage are

called “not marriage material” and Egyptian men refuse to marry them. There was a thirty-five minute documentary conducted by journalist Amal Fawzi, asking men about sex before marriage, the question was “Would they marry a woman he had slept with before marriage, and the answer was ‘no’ she was considered to have given up her honor and thus threw suspicion on her ability to maintain honor after marriage” (Suleiman, 2008, 1). “In Muslim countries, sex before marriage is prohibited from a social and religious perspective. The majority of Arab men would never agree to marry a non-virgin and in more conservative parts of the Muslim world, usually the countryside, a woman could be killed by her family if she was discovered to have lost her virginity, known as an ‘honor crime’” (Suleiman, 2008,2).

Honor crimes refer to the murder of a woman by her male family members for a perceived violation of the social norms of sexuality, or a suspicion of women having transgressed the limits of social behavior imposed by traditions. This includes seeing or meeting a man even if this is only a suspicion or a gossip. Honor crimes include also a husband kills his wife whom he or other family members suspected her of adultery. It is difficult to estimate the overall number of honor killings that take place yearly in Egypt. An Egyptian report based on 1995 statistics counted 52 honor killings reported. (Khafagy, 2005, 3)

An Egyptian woman’s virtue is measured by keeping her sexuality unexposed. If a family found out that their daughter is not a virgin before marriage, she can be beaten, disowned, and sometimes killed for the family’s honor. Some families would rather physically abuse and kill their daughter than be ashamed and have no honor. Egyptian families want their daughters to remain pure and untouched until they are married, because to them, they are obeying and fulfilling the teachings of their religion and culture.

Causes of Honor Killing	Degree of relationship between the victims and the murderer
Murder of a female for being suspected 79%	Husband killing the wife 41%
Murder of a female because of adultery 9%	Father killing the daughter 34%
Murder of a female to hide incest 6%	Brother killing the sister 18%
Murder for other reasons 6%	A man killing his female relative 7%

(Khafagy, 2005, 4)

The Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance CEWLA reported the percentages of the reasons behind honor killing. The chart above demonstrates that seventy nine percent of honor killings are due to allegations and forty-one percent of these killings are being executed by the husbands. The chart also shows that thirty-four percent of fathers are killing their daughters for committing adultery.

Other traditions that exist in Islam are for Muslim women to be covered with the veil. There is a difference between a women being modest and covering herself in order not to be viewed as a sexual object to a man and being fully covered from head to toe. “Though the Quran is not always clear on what modesty entails, it has generally been held by the orthodox [Muslims] that parts or all arms should be covered, the neck, all the hair [the veil], from neck to knee, and perhaps more of the body down to the wrist and ankle” (Rugh, 1984, 229). There are different forms of covering, the veil (hijab) “The word *hijāb* is used in the contemporary Islamic world both in reference to a head-covering and to a particular style of dress considered modest and Islamic” (El Guindi, 2012, 23) and the niqab is full face and body veil where the woman’s eyes only is

showing. This is mandated by Muslim men; this is a form of men controlling women. “Islamic tradition assumes that women are the objects of sexual desire and men the desiring subjects, an assumption that has come to justify the injunction that women should ‘hide their charms’ when in public so as not to excite the libidinal energies of men who are not their immediate kin” (Mahmood, 2005, 110). The women are always at fault in the men’s eyes. A husband can beat or curse his wife for not covering her body because she is assumed by society that she is a sexual object for all other men; therefore, if she is raped, it would be counted as “she was asking for it.” To further examine rape cases, judges do not always side with a woman who was raped, “rapes are allegedly difficult to pursue legally...Judges take into account the way the women was dressed when she was raped” (Benninger-Budel, 2001, 26). The blame is assigned to women, suggesting that they were dressed in a provocative way and underestimating the fact that she was physically and sexually violated.

Religious customs like wearing the Hijab is necessary now because women suffer public and private violence if they choose not to cover up.

Prior to the 1970s, only the most conservative women wore headscarves, but cases of sexual harassment were rare. Men caught harassing women were chased through the streets and often had their heads shaved as a mark of shame. Today, women face a significant social pressure to cover up, and are often blamed for sexual harassment if they don’t. Still, according to a recent UN report, more than 99 percent of women in Egypt have been sexually harassed (Dyer, 2014, 2).

This is problematic for both Muslim and Christian women because not all Muslim women choose to wear the hijab and it is not a requirement for Christian women to wear any type of head covering. Today women are subjected to street harassments because they are not wearing the hijab. Some unidentified men are violating women and women are blamed for the harassment because they choose not to cover up. Many men had taken

this as an invitation to violate women. These men were identified as thugs utilized by the state as a form of terror according to Paul Amar, “Sexualized brutality, was seen as an instrument of state terror deployed tactically by the police state, rather than as a cultural attribute shared by all male Arabs” (Amar, 2011, 301). During the 2011 revolution, Professor Mona Prince explained her encounter with sexual harassment in public.

4 or 5 huge men grabbed me from my hair and said ‘well join him you bitch’ and slapped me on the face and cornered me next to the young man and kept hitting me on my head, arm shoulder, back, stepping on my head with their shoes until I bled from my mouth and could not speak any more on the ground. . . .They threw us all in the microbus. And while pushing me inside they were trying to pull off my clothes and sexually harassed me, one grabbed my breasts, another held my waist, and another grabbed my bottom. They grabbed the mobile from me, and then threw me to the asphalt road (quoted in Amar, 2011, 300).

The thugs acted on behalf of the police to violate women protesters, “plain-clothes thugs, deputized by police and paramilitary security forces. Whereas in the 1990s, baltagiya (the gangs of ‘thugs’ and networks of violent extortion rackets seen as emanating from the informal settlements surrounding downtown Cairo) were identified as terrorist enemies of the security state (Ismail 2006: 145), by the 2000s, the baltagiya had been appropriated as useful tools of the police” (Amar, 2011, 308). In addition, police continued to ignore these vicious attacks on women. “In 2006, several occurrences of sexualized mobbing of women were reported, with a few incidents being captured on cell phone video. Significant in each report was the presence of police permitting, and even encouraging, the attacks” (Amar, 2011, 314). At any given point, an Egyptian woman can become the subject of harassment.

Furthermore, some Muslim men demonstrate their control by making women (mothers, wives, and daughters) wear the hijab. In Egypt, “A strong reason for the veiling of Muslim women... come from the fact that unveiling is seen as the influence of

the West on ‘their’ women, and therefore control of them. So, to establish and assert their control over their ‘own’ women, Muslim men insist on Muslim women being veiled” (Afshar, 1999, 44). In this case, women are facing violence publicly and within their homes when men (husbands, fathers, brothers) are demanding Muslim women to wear the hijab. The issues of wearing the hijab in public escalated in Egypt, some followers of the Muslim Brotherhood are taking a lead in performing violent acts. For example, “In November 2013, two women wearing niqabs attacked and cut the hair of a Christian woman and then pushed her out of the train carriage, shouting ‘Infidel!’” (Dyer, 2014, 2). Not only are women violated by men but now they are facing violence by other women who wish for all women to be veiled according to the strict teaching of the Muslim Brotherhood. Why should a Christian girl who is not required by her religion to cover up, have her hair cut off as if she has committed a crime. If Egyptian women do not stand united against violence, is there hope for violence against women to end in Egypt?

History repeated itself when Sadat was in power, “Going back to the 1970s, when Anwar Sadat used Islamism to solidify his leadership of Egypt, Coptic women and girls have been abducted, forced to marry their captors, and coercively converted to Islam” (Smith, 2012, 1). There has been a rise in the number of Coptic Christian women being forced to convert to Islam, “Just four attorneys said they had over 550 cases over five years of Christian girls applying to have their religious identity restored by the Egyptian government after being kidnapped and forced into converting to Islam. One attorney said he personally knew of at least 1,600 cases of forced conversions” (Mauro, 2014, 1). This is another demonstration of violence against women because of their religion affiliation.

In 2013, the rate of Christian women who experienced violence because of religion rose to the top. For example, “17-year-old Christian from Al-Fayoum: Drugged, kidnapped, raped, and coerced into conversion to Islam, forcibly married. 19-year-old Christian from Cairo: Abducted, raped, incarcerated, forcibly married, converted to Islam. 15-year-old Christian from El Menya: raped, gave birth, converted to Islam, physically scarred, forcibly married, drugged, and prostituted” (Daniels, 2014, 1). Escaping their captors is not the end of their victimization from the religious and government standpoint, “Girls that are victims of forced conversions that are lucky enough to escape face additional problems. Firstly, any known conversion from Islam to Christianity (even if one was originally Christian) makes her an “apostate.” That puts a giant target on her back because sharia’s punishment for apostates is death. Secondly, the Egyptian government won’t let the girls’ change their registered religion back to Christianity” (Mauro, 2014, 1). The violently raped Coptic Christian females were all underage and now they are scarred for the rest of their lives. Islam and Christianity do not teach violence against women but it is the individuals who interpret religious teachings in their own perspectives that result in cruelty and brutality.

Other traditions like religious holidays are usually a time where family and friends are gathering to celebrate and a time of happiness but not in Egypt today. During the two main Muslim holidays; Eid el Fitr and Eid el Adha: many women are now facing violence during these celebrations.

Sexual harassment tends to increase during public religious holidays such as *Eid el Fitr* and *Eid el Adha*, when streets are crowded... In one reported incident, on the first day of the *Eid el Fitr* in 2006, groups of men attacked women passers-by in downtown Cairo, stripped them of their clothes and sexually assaulted them. In 2009 during the first day of *Eid el Adha*, groups of young boys stripped women of

their clothes and sexually assaulted them in Mohandesin, Cairo” (FIDH, 2014, 20).

Some men are removing women’s clothing and violating them in public and sexually assaulting them in today’s Egyptian society. “Women are subjected to daily sexual harassment in the streets, public transport, shops, markets, schools, universities, clubs, tourist spots, protests and the workplace” (FIDH, 2014, 19). The answer cannot be that women have to stay in their homes at all times to avoid public violence; but that also does not eliminate violence because many women are experiencing domestic violence within their homes. Where can women escape to avoid both public and private violence? In addition, Egyptian men are not denying the fact that they do violate women, “A study published by the Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights in 2008 found that 86% of men interviewed admitted to having sexually harassed women. Such daily violence has serious consequences for women’s freedom of movement, including use of public transport, going out during public holidays, walking in the streets after dark, or going out in the street at all” (FIDH, 2014, 19). Men are admitting that they are abusing women publicly and privately. “In rural areas, women’s day-to-day freedom of movement can be restricted, and widespread sexual harassment in urban areas also inhibits freedom of movement” (FIDH, 2014, 20). If this took place, women would not be able to obtain an education nor would they find employment, which would result in women getting married, staying at home, and relying on the man for support. This would result in women not having money, staying at home possibly in an abusive relationship, and not having any means economically to support herself or her children. Is this what Egyptian men are trying to do in the 21st century? This would be a brutal cycle that would have devastating effects on all Egyptian women.

Today, the media plays an important part in raising awareness about the lives of Egyptian women. In 2009, there was the release of a powerful film exposing the lives of Egyptian women which was based on true stories. This film is an opportunity to raise awareness for Egyptian women concerning domestic violence taking place in their society not only in their individual homes. “Ehky ya Scheherazade,” which is translated to “Scheherazade, Tell Me a Story,” the film is about a powerful journalist woman having her own talk show asking women to tell their stories about all the different kinds of domestic violence they are experiencing or have experienced. These women speak about sexual harassment on public transportation; for example, one woman became pregnant out of wedlock and was beaten, in addition the father did not claim the child, so she was disowned by her family. The women tell many abusive stories to the journalist that they experience from their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In addition, the journalist, who is the main character, herself, is beaten by her husband, who has a very powerful government position. Both the journalist and her husband are well educated and rank as high class citizens, this exposure demonstrates that not only lower class women experience domestic violence. At the end of the movie, they validate that abuse does not only happen to lower class, non-educated women but also to educated powerful women who want to make a positive change. This movie is powerful because there are not many Arabic movies that support women and show men as abusers, this can serve as an eye opener to local women and illustrate to them that they can speak up about their struggles with domestic violence.

In 2012, an Egyptian television series was released, “The Fourth wife.” This series is about a very rich man (Mostafa Shaaban) who lives in his mansion with three

wives and through the entire series; he marries a fourth wife and divorces her to marry another one, because according to Islam, a man can be married to only four wives at the same time. The main character, the male, punishes and beats his wives if they do not agree to his circumstances. Shabban's character is not only very rich but a very "religious" man who marries and divorces according to the Islamic religion but he only does that for his pleasure. Shabban's character forces his first wife to always drug the new fourth wife, so that she does not bear children and he can replace her at any time; since he has children from his other three wives. When he found out that the first wife did not abide by his demand and the fourth wife becomes pregnant, he beats both of them. Toward the end of the series, he marries an educated journalist who stands up for rights and the rights of the three other wives. Her purpose was to educate the women that they should not accept the abuse from their husband; this resulted in all the wives leaving their husband because of his violent nature. The three wives only returned to the home after the husband apologizes for all the physical and sexual abuse he caused all his wives but the journalist demanded a divorce. The television series was made to educate women about their rights and that they should leave their abusive situation. The media is slowly trying to raise awareness about domestic violence.

Now more than ever domestic violence, sexual harassment, and abuse are on the rise in Egypt. The Quran and the Bible are taken out of context and misinterpreted by men. When Egyptian men, whether Muslims or Christians, abuse or rape women, they pass the blame, stating that they are following their religious teachings and traditions. Women are also blamed for being provocative if they are not covered up with the hijab or niqab or not fully submitting to the man. Domestic abuse, marital rape, honor killings,

and public sexual harassment are matters that some Egyptian women have to deal with on a daily basis. The government and religions side with men, consequently women are trapped in violent homes and marriages where they have to be silent, submissive, and obedient to their fathers, brothers, and husbands in order to survive. But with the media raising awareness about domestic violence, hope is on the way for these abused women to learn and escape their violent situations.

Chapter 3

Women's Anti-Violence Activism in Egypt

(1980-2014)

The emergence of the different NGOs brought education and awareness to some Egyptian women. It was the first step towards understanding that Egyptian women are entitled to rights and that there may be an alternative solution to staying in an abusive relationship. The government closely watched the NGOs. "Civil society in Egypt is strongly regulated by the state; NGO's, professional syndicates and individual intellectuals are closely monitored by draconian laws to ensure compliance. Under the regimes of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak, numerous NGOs have emerged as an alternative to the consolidation of state social, economic and political power" (Basarudin, 1, 2014). Nevertheless, NGOs flourished in Egypt under different policies raising awareness to many Egyptian women.

Women's NGOs have taken up a large range of issues including education, literacy, media images, female empowerment, political and legal rights, cultural awareness, sexual harassment, healthcare, leadership, and so forth. Some of the active non-governmental women's organizations include: the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women in Egypt (ADEW), which works with low-income women of female-headed households; the Egyptian Centre for Women's Right (ECWR), which was founded in 1996, and is an independent NGO in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which works to promote women's rights and gender equality in all areas of private and public life. In 2000, the National Council for Women (NCW) was established to advance the status of women in social, economic and political arenas (Basarudin, 1, 2014).

Some Egyptian women experience domestic violence in their daily lives, most are silent because they fear the outcome of speaking out or taking action, however, not all women are silent to the violence they see or experience. There are a few women who spoke and

continue to speak on behalf of women's rights in Egypt. Some of these women included Jihan Sadat, Nawal al-Saadawi, Hoda Badran, Mervat Tallawy, and Hala Shukrallah.

As noted above, Jihan Sadat, the wife of President Anwar Sadat, was an advocate of women's rights. In an interview with Jihan Sadat, she stated that she was inspired by previous feminist Huda Sha'arawi (1879-1947), "Huda asked for more schools, jobs for girls, the raising of the age for marriage. She asked for so many things. Unfortunately, she didn't get any of them. She led 350 women into the streets, in a demonstration calling for the expulsion of the British. It shocked the whole country for veiled women to demonstrate" (Davis, 2000, 4). Jihan wished for Egyptian women to have equal rights, "The advocacy of women's cause espoused by Jihan Sadat and inspired by the UN decade of women (1975-1985) was encouraged by the state. Hoda Bardan is the Chairperson of the Alliance for Arab Women (AAW). AAW works with a network of over 350 NGOs on issues of Arab women's human rights, legal literacy for women leaders. Mervat Tallawy was the Secretary-General of the National Council for Women in Egypt. She served as Minister for Insurance and Social Affairs of Egypt (1997-1999). Hala Shukrallah is the director of the Development Support Center for consultancy and training, a consultancy firm providing support and assistance to civil society organizations. She won the liberal Constitution Party's leadership and became the first Coptic woman to head an Egyptian political party. "The party attracted support of a number of young revolutionaries when it was founded by ElBaradei in 2011 after the revolution" (Ahram, 2014, 1).

The independent and radical feminism promoted by al-Saadawi and others was contained. "The government could not tolerate independent feminist activism because of

its need to appease conservative Islamist forces” (Badran, 2009, 40). The state only encouraged Jihan Sadat’s advocacy for women’s rights but they did not always support feminist organizations. The conservative Islamist groups would not allow for women to speak freely about their rights and have their own independent feminist groups.

Nevertheless, not all women became submissive to the Islamist groups. Some activists spoke out to enlighten Egyptian women about violence:

Al-Saadawi attacked the sexual double standard. She enlightened many women in Egypt, and helped to raise the consciousness of a whole generation of women students in the democratic movement...Just as al-Saadawi put the spotlight on sexual abuses, the nascent Islamist movement, by advocating a return to the veil, accentuated the notion of women as sexual beings. Islamist and other conservatives groups have linked feminism with sexual freedom, and have yet to be broken (Badran, 2009, 150).

There was always a backlash from extremist and sexist groups that insisted women should “return to the veil” and stay at home. Islamists viewed feminism as empowering women to gain sexual freedom. It is important to address the phrase “return to the veil.” Not all women who wear the veil view it as a form of repression, while some women are forced by men to wear it. Al-Saadawi educated women on violence and advocated against it, “A number of women, under the leadership of al-Saadawi, struggled to establish the Arab Women’s Solidarity Association (AWSA). In AWSA’s own words, “We knew that the liberation of the people as a whole could not take place without the liberation of women and this could not take place without the liberation of the land, economy, culture, and information” (Badran, 2009, 43). Liberating Egyptian women was not an easy task for women activists in Egypt because the culture considers women as second class citizens. Activists knew that Egypt must be a liberated nation before they

can make progress with women's rights. The most important notion was the beginning of enlightening women about their rights and informing them about domestic violence.

Women's organizations started to become popular in the 1980s, "At the beginning of 1985, the AWSA registered with the United Nations as a non-governmental organization" (Badran, 2009, 44). The AWSA is one of the most important women's rights organizations that are still operating today in Egypt. As time progressed, more women's rights organizations aided in amending the laws.

In 1985 when the revised Muslim Personal Status Law of 1979 (the first major revision since 1929) was revoked, feminists formed a broad coalition constituting the Lajnat Al-Difa' 'an Huquq Al-Mar'a wal-Usra (the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Woman and the Family), which successfully fought for the reinstatement of the law (albeit in a slightly modified form). Although the rescinding of the law was part of a larger political battle that transcended issues of personal status, the regulation of family life would prove the most contentious and least satisfactorily settled feminist issue during the century (Badran, 2009, 6).

A timeline is helpful to chart events advocating for women's rights. Following the AWSA, "In 1986 a group formed around the Majallat Al-Mar'a Al-Jadida (The New Woman Magazine) and began to help ordinary women deal with health issues and legal aid and to assist them in income-generating projects" (Badran, 2009, 6). This magazine addressed women's health issues and it served the purpose to assist ordinary Egyptian women to acknowledge the difficulties they face in their daily lives. There were not many magazines that wrote about the average woman in Egypt. Nevertheless, "In 1987 a group of women and men founded Rabitat Al-Mar'a Al-Arabiya (the Alliance for Arab Women), headed by women's development specialist Huda Badran. The organization focuses on women's political and legal rights. Other professional women also brought their experience to bear in the service of women's legal needs" (Badran, 2009, 7). There was progress in the women's movement and the Alliance for Arab Women was founded

in 1987 and it “works as an umbrella to a network of 350 Egyptian civil society organization and cooperates with other Egyptian and Arab organizations to provide women with basic human security through influencing policies and legislations, and by providing services and programs within the framework of human rights” (Badran, 2009, 10). It was time for women to start understanding that they should have the same legal rights as men do. More and more women’s rights group were formed,

In 1990, the New Women group announced itself as a progressive and democratic feminist group of women who believe that while the Egyptian women share with men the hardships brought about by backwardness, dependence and economic crisis, they have to carry a double burden and suffer from various forms of subordination, oppression and suppression arising specifically from their position as women (Badran, 2009, 133).

Both Egyptian men and women face hardships but Egyptian women face the double standard of being second class citizens in their own homeland. The New Women group addressed these issues in their campaigns for the rights of Egyptian women. Feminists and activists brought attention to women about their rights and what should be considered issues in the Egyptian society. As time progressed so did the work of the activists, “Feminists paid renewed attention to issues of women’s health and sexuality when Cairo hosted the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. Although female circumcision, called female genital mutilation by some, had been a feminist issue in the 1970s, there was now an intensification of the campaign against this continuing, and even growing, practice (Badran, 1994, 7). They reopened the issue of female genital mutilation and addressed the women’s health and sexuality. These campaigns educated Egyptian women about their rights as not only women but as human beings. In addition, in 1994 the United Nations held a conference addressing additional women’s issues.

Many activists in the Egyptian women’s movement view the preparations for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

in Cairo (September 1994)... The preparations for the ICPD and the conference itself created space for many women activists in Egypt to address previously taboo topics (abortion, violence, reproductive rights) or to discuss issues of common concern (equality before the law, political participation, structural adjustment, the Personal Status and nationality laws) with women from different political orientations and backgrounds (Al-Ali, 2000, 11).

The activists spoke about the most important topics related to women's rights, which were once considered to be taboo topics. Among the topics, violence against women was brought up for women to gain equality before the law. In other words, violence against women should not take place and if women experience it, they should have the right by law to report it and their abusers should be punished.

Unfortunately, addressing the topic of violence against women was not enough to end it in Egypt. The percentage of Egyptian women who experienced domestic violence was very high in 1995. The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women reported in 1995:

33% of married women report having been beaten at least once in their marriage, 72% of surveyed women who experienced violence reported being beaten by their husbands, 43% by their fathers, 37% by their brothers, and 80% of rural women in Egypt report beatings are common (Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, 5, 1995).

“In 1996, the World Health Assembly declared violence against women to be a major public health problem that urgently needed to be addressed by governments and health organizations” (Monazea,1). Furthermore, in 1996, the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) was founded by six women. Headed by Nihad Abu El-Qoumsan, ECWR flourishes in Egypt. The ECWR fought for Egyptian women's equality in the public life and developing awareness about their rights. The organization also, “provides legal aids for women in solving their daily life problems. It carries out its principles by mass awareness of women by public meeting and mass training of women”

(Egypt NGO Center, 3, 2009). A few years later, other women's rights organization were initiated and laws were passed in favor of Egyptian women.

In 2000 National Council for Women (NCW) was founded, whose president is Suzanne Mubarak. January 2000, the Egyptian National Assembly passed Law No. 1, granting women the right to a no-fault divorce within three months without a husband's consent. Then, in July 2004, an amended nationality law extended nationality rights to children of Egyptian women married to non-Egyptian husbands (El-Azhary Sonbol, 1).

During that period of time, Suzanne Mubarak was the first lady of Egypt. She influenced the passing of different laws for Egyptian women. The laws that were passed under the NCW included: "In 2000, the Khula law was passed, which allowed women to seek divorce of her husband and legally be allowed remuneration. In 2004, the Citizenship laws were passed, which allowed foreign women who were married to Egyptian men could pass Egyptian nationality onto their children. In 2005, the Child custody laws were passed, which allowed mothers to be able to retain custody of their child, up to the age of fifteen, in the event of a divorce" (Hooper, 2013, 1). These laws were a start for Egyptian women to have some rights in their homeland. The Khula law was one way that women could escape an abusive marriage when the husband refused to divorce his wife.

The NCW started to provide more resources for Egyptian women. They helped women with their grievances and were able to resolve some of their issues.

The NCW has established an Ombudsman Office in 2002 to receive complaints from women with regard to gender discrimination. In two years, it has received 7000 complaints. The office has appointed lawyers and installed a toll-free hotline. The complaints deal with gender discrimination at the work place, personal status law, and domestic violence. The Ombudsman has managed to solve around 40% of all complaints. It also assigns free of charge lawyers to poor women who cannot afford to file court cases. The Ombudsman in addressing violence against women cooperates with the Social Affairs which has established shelters for women victims of violence (National Council for Women, 2002, 2).

In addition, the NCW was making a small change to some women's lives. Solving a small percentage (40 %) of the complaints they received at the Ombudsman office was promising to the future of women's problems in Egypt. The Ombudsman office did not stop with just receiving complaints from women; they assigned lawyers, implemented free hotlines, and requested women officers to examine domestic violence cases. Some women feel more comfortable speaking to other women about their domestic violence experiences. "The Ombudsman office at the NCW cooperates with the Ministry of Interior to train officers at police stations on how to register complaints of women victims of domestic violence. NGOs are advocating the need to assign police women to investigate cases of domestic violence" (National Council for Women, 2002, 9). The NCW did not stop; they were determined to make a change for Egyptian women's lives. In their next step, they started working with the media for production to raise awareness about the different challenges complicating the lives of some Egyptian women.

In collaboration with competent authorities, NCW has been sponsoring short films, snapshots and messages to create awareness of the masses or to target special groups that take into consideration the social or cultural norms of such groups... To this effect, local TV channels that now have been created in Egypt's eight geographical divisions have been an extremely powerful social communicator. The Radio and Television administration allocated LE 3 million to raise awareness of women's issues, gender equality and the importance of changing the negative portrayal of women (National Council for Women, 2002, 15).

The LE 3 million is a significant amount of money for different short films and television channels addressing the fact that some Egyptian women are facing domestic violence and portrayed as second class citizens in Egypt. The NCW continued their mission to educate women about their rights in collaboration with public media, "The Radio and Television Broadcasting Services and NCW also cooperated in launching a media campaign in 2003

under the theme: *'Women Development Enhancement via Awareness Campaigns'* aiming at enlightening women about their rights and helping them to know about services offered by institutions working for their advancement so that they can avail themselves with such services" (National Council for Women, 2002, 15). Radio and television have a large influence on individual's lives; therefore, it was an exceptional strategy for the NCW to utilize in raising awareness about women's right against domestic violence and equality. Aside from the media, the NCW worked with different groups to raise awareness and educate women about their rights. "The Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with NCW, held several workshops and seminars to raise awareness among the Egyptian population, women in particular, of women rights and obligations. Furthermore, NCW is continuously conducting training programs targeting influential media personnel to increase their awareness of the role of women in society and of women's issues" (National Council for Women, 2002, 15). It is very important to continue holding workshops and seminars for women to remain educated about their rights and that they should never put up with domestic violence, any form of abuse, and not gain their rights as equal citizens of Egypt. With the aid of NCW and NGO's, this can be achieved one step at a time.

Egyptian women have been battling the implications of the Muslim Brotherhood (2011-2013). "The MB [Muslim Brotherhood] immediately reversed the gains achieved in the past decade, undoing the achievements of the previous government. The 'Suzanne Mubarak laws' have now all been reversed, deemed not constitutionally legitimate, and are all but forgotten. Women are in a far worse position in 2013 than they were in 2003" (Hooper, 2013, 1). Instead of women advancing and gaining their full rights in their

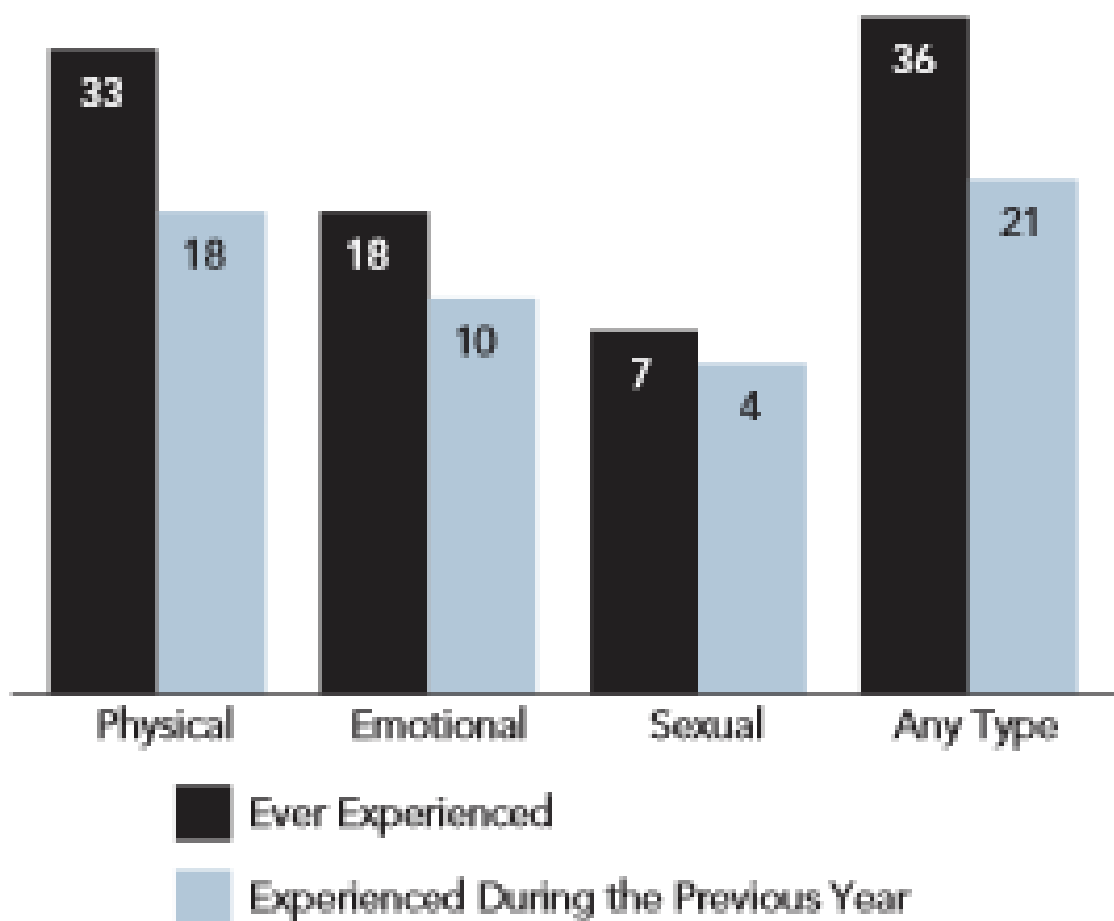
society, their rights were taken away by the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, some changes were starting to take place. “In 2013, the NCW was beginning to regain some of its power, albeit a shadow of its former influence... in partnership with the NCW, the Egyptian Government has announced plans to implement a special female police force, whose priority will be the prevention of violence against women and to provide victim support” (Hooper, 2013, 1). The NCW is trying to regain what was lost of Egyptian women’s rights.

Despite all different laws that were passed, the feminist and activist groups fighting and addressing women’s rights, many Egyptian women are still experiencing domestic violence. “Data is still limited from some regions in Egypt. In a 1999-2000 survey by the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, 62.5% of women reported having experienced domestic abuse. Findings between 2004 and 2012 suggest increasing rates of Violence against Women... one in three reported they had been subjected to physical violence at least once by their current or most recent husband” (Guimei, 2012, 332). The charts below capture the percentage of women that reported their experience of domestic violence.

Graph 1 demonstrates the different types of domestic violence that wives experienced from their husbands in 2005. Of the four different types of violence; physical, emotional, sexual, and any type; the second highest form of violence women experienced was physical abuse, women report that because most of the time, the bruises cannot be hidden. Any type of violence pointed to a higher percentage because it was a combination of abuse. This shows that all types of violence and abuse are experienced by some Egyptian women who are willing to report it.

Graph 1:

Percent of Ever-Married Women Ages 15-49 Who Have Experienced Spousal Violence, by Type of Violence, Egypt 2005



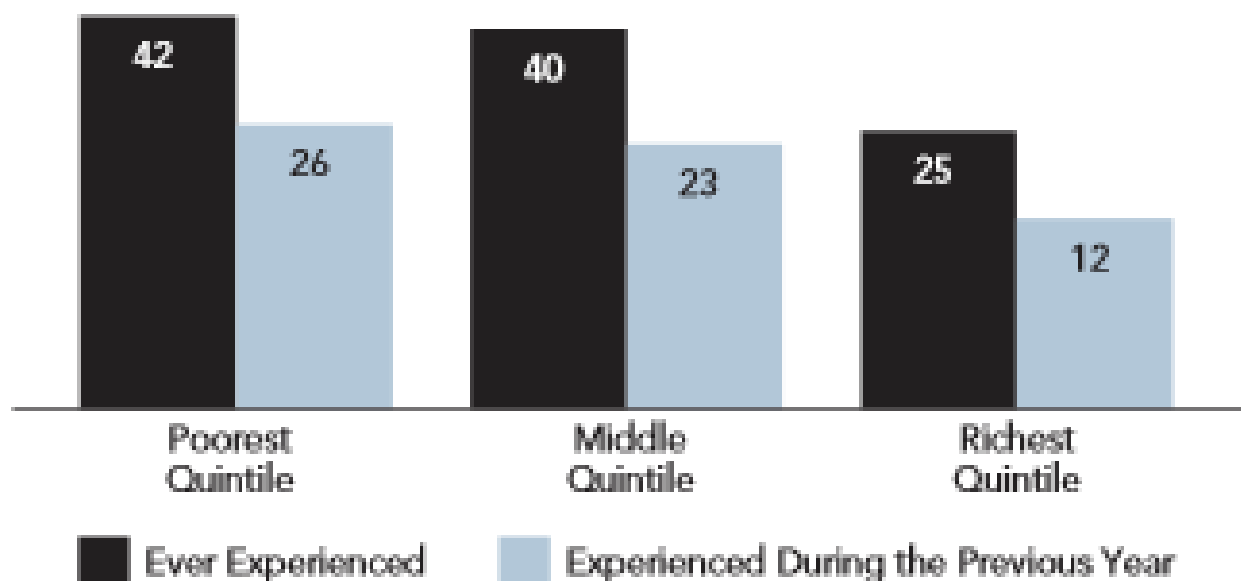
Source: Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005: table 17.6.

The second graph points also those women from all different class status experience domestic violence by their husbands. The poorest class ranks the highest in experiencing domestic violence, yet even among the richest class, 25% of women have ever experienced domestic violence. This chart proves that no matter what class women

belong to, they still are subordinate to their male counterparts and that nearly half of married women experience domestic violence.

Graph 2:

Percent of Married Women Ages 15–49 Who Experienced Spousal Violence During the Previous Year, by Wealth Quintile*, Egypt 2005



*Wealth quintiles (five groups of equal size) were created using an index of household assets. The first, third, and fifth quintiles are shown here.

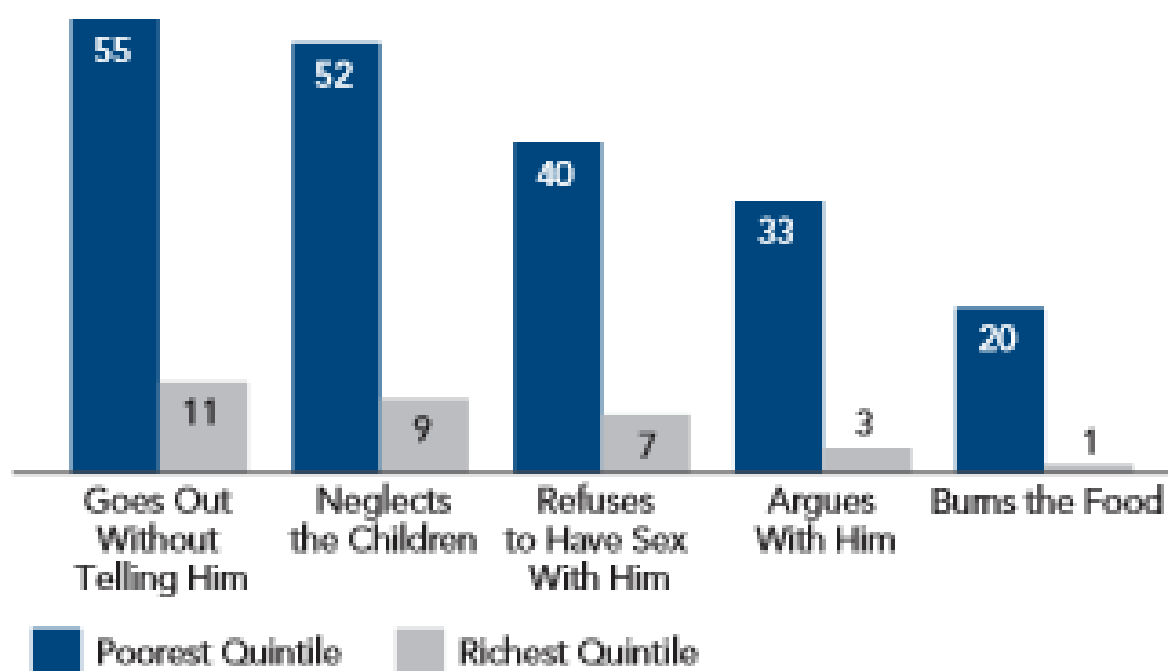
Source: Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005: table 17.5.

The third graph above indicates that many Egyptian married women believe that their husband beating them is a justified form for disciplining them. Again, the poorest families demonstrate the highest percentage of husbands abusing their wives. Not to justify the abuse, but poor families experience different levels of stress that can result in the husband abusing his wife. “Nearly 60 percent of women with no education condoned

wife beating for at least one of those reasons (above), compared with 22 percent of women who had completed secondary school or higher. Similarly, 63 percent of women belonging to the lowest wealth quintile condoned wife beating versus 16 percent of those in the highest wealth quintile” (Kharboush, 2010, 5).

Graph 3:

Percent of Married Women Ages 15-49 Who Agree That a Husband Is Justified in Beating His Wife, by Reasons for Beating and Wealth Quintile*, Egypt 2008



*Wealth quintiles (five groups of equal size) were created using an index of household assets. The first and fifth quintiles are shown here.

Source: Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2008; table 3.14.

Table 1 demonstrates some Egyptian women’s experience with domestic violence.

Women in rural areas show the highest experience with domestic violence and highest agreement that husbands should have the right to beat their wives. However, urban

women show highest percentage of seeking social support from their families but not armed forces. Only two women requested the assistance of the police; one urban woman and one squatter woman. Women fear reporting abuse to the authorities.

Table 1: Women's Exposure to DV and Sexual Abuse (Guimei, 2012, 334) (Urban)

	Urban (n = 150)		Rural (n = 150)		Squatter (n = 150)		Significance
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Opinion about wives being beaten by their husband							
Agree	0	0	5	3.3	2	1.3	$\chi^2 = 56.92$
Agree in certain situations	15	10.0	48	32.0	63	42.0	$p < .0001$
Women experiencing DV							
Yes	62	41.3	89	59.3	90	60	$\chi^2 = 13.53$ $p = .001$
Provoking physical violence^{2a}							
	(n = 62)		(n = 89)		(n = 90)		
Problems with husband's family	25	40.3	36	40.4	31	34.4	
Argument with husband	34	54.8	45	50.6	59	65.6	
Others	35	56.6	32	35.96	29	32.2	
Number violence attacks last year							
	(n = 62)		(n = 89)		(n = 90)		[χ^2] 2.126
Mean \pm SD	3.95 \pm 3.74		3.69 \pm 3.36		4.6 \pm 4.08		$p = .345$
Being beaten witnessed by others							
	(n = 62)		(n = 89)		(n = 90)		$\chi^2 = 3.03$
Yes	55	88.7	88	98.8	71	78.9	$p = .219$
Women seeking help after DV							
	(n = 62)		(n = 89)		(n = 90)		$\chi^2 = 15.94$
Yes	32	51.6	34	38.2	39	43.3	$p = .003$
Social support^{2a}							
	(n = 32)		(n = 34)		(n = 39)		
Family members (wife)	30	93.7	31	91.2	29	74.3	
Family members (husband/friends)	1	3.1	3	8.8	9	23.1	
Police	1	3.1	0	0	1	2.6	
Sustaining injury from DV							
	(n = 62)		(n = 89)		(n = 90)		$\chi^2 = 3.52$
Yes	32	51.6	41	46.1	54	60	$p = .17$
Seeking healthcare after DV							
	(n = 32)		(n = 41)		(n = 54)		$\chi^2 = 2.14$
Yes	10	31.2	12	29.3	23	42.6	$p = .344$
Childhood exposure to physical violence							
	(n = 150)		(n = 150)		(n = 150)		$\chi^2 = 19.6$
Yes	57	38.0	53	35.3	79	52.7	$p < .0001$
Witness family violence							
	(n = 150)		(n = 150)		(n = 150)		$\chi^2 = 8.33$
Often	3	2.0	6	4.0	12	8.0	$p = .08$
Sometimes	29	19.3	20	13.3	21	14.0	
Husband's right to have sex at any time							
	(n = 150)		(n = 150)		(n = 150)		$\chi^2 = 26.86$
Agree	38	25.3	82	54.7	61	40.7	$p < .0001$
Experiencing forced sex							
	(n = 150)		(n = 150)		(n = 150)		$\chi^2 = 2.6$
Yes	41	27.3	54	36.0	48	32.0	$p = .27$

DV = domestic violence; SD = standard deviation.

^aMore than one answer.

^bCategories not mutually exclusive. [χ^2] chi-square test Kruskal-Wallis test, χ^2 .

Egyptian girls and women are experiencing domestic violence from the age of 15 to 49 as demonstrated in table 2. Not only are underage girls getting married but they are experiencing physical abuse from their spouse. All kinds of women from different status experience domestic violence but rural and non-educated women experience a higher percentage of violence than higher status and educated women. “In 2005, 33 percent of women report that they had ever been hit, slapped, kicked, or subjected to some other form of physical violence at some point by their current or previous husband. In 1995, 34 percent of married women report having ever been “beaten” by their husband at some point since their first marriage” (National Council for Women, 2009, 21). The percentages of abused women decreased by only one percent from 1995 to 2005.

Table 2: Percent of currently married women who have experienced (physical, sexual, or psychological) violence from most recent husband by socioeconomic characteristics, EDHS 2005 (National Council for Women, 20)

	Ever	Within past 12 months
Age		
15-19	20.9	17.2
20-29	33.1	23.6
30-39	38.1	22.9
40-49	36.4	18.3
Education		
No education	42.6	27.2
Some primary	45.8	27.2
Primary complete/some secondary	40.4	25.4
Secondary complete/higher	24.5	14.4
Work status		
Working for cash	29.2	16.3
Not working for cash	36.3	22.7
Wealth quintile		
Lowest	41.0	27.7
Second	39.3	24.3
Middle	39.3	24.3
Fourth	33.2	18.9
Highest	23.5	12.2
Location		
Urban	32.6	18.5
Rural	37.0	23.9
Total	35.1	21.6

Many women defend their husbands for abusing them. Some women believed that it is acceptable for their husbands to abuse them for the following four reasons; neglecting the children, refusing to have sex with husband, burning the food, or all the above. Table 3 above illustrates that there has been a decline in percentages from 1995 to 2005, “17 percent of women in 2005 agreed with all three reasons compared with 23

percent in 1995” (NCW, 2009, 22). The data decreased by six percent from 1995 to 2005 which is not drastic but it is a start for Egyptian women understanding that there should not be any reason that validates any form of domestic violence. Table 3 also demonstrates that 70 percent of women justified their husbands beating them for refusing to have sex with him in 1995 but only 34 percent justified the action in 2005, which was the largest percent of decline compared to the other reasons. Therefore, this illustrates that women are slowly becoming aware of their rights and that they should not justify their husband’s abuse towards them.

Table 3: Percentage of women who agree that wife-beating is justified for the following reasons, 1995 and 2005 EDHS (National Council for Women, 22)

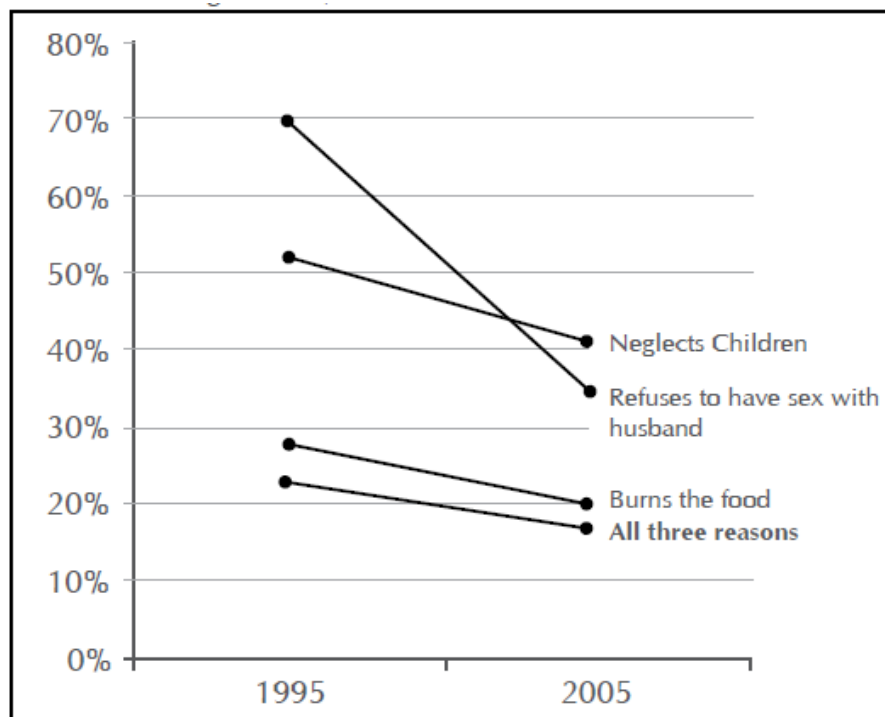


Table 4 proves that in 2005, a total of 63.2 percent of 1276 married women experienced violence during their lifetime, but 63.7 percent of married women experienced violence in the last 12 month, which was a higher percentage. Instead of the percentage decreasing, they are rapidly increasing. Table 4 also demonstrates the different categories of domestic violence and community violence, with percentages of psychological, physical, and sexual violence. The percentages of ever experienced psychological violence like being insulted or emotional and verbal abuse is in the 60 percent range, while the physical as in kicking and dragging is in the 20 percent range, and sexual violence as in forced sexual relations is around the 17 percent range. The table shows that the numbers have been decreasing in the last 12 months compared to ever experienced, which illustrated hope that Egyptian women experiencing violence is heading in the right direction.

Table 4: Respondent married women victims of violence and married men perpetrators of violence by type of violence

	Married Women Victims of Violence		Married Men Perpetrators of Violence	
	Ever Experienced	Experienced in Last 12 Months	Ever Inflicted	Inflicted in Last 12 Months
Total N	1276	1276	1044	1044
% Experienced/Inflicted Any Violence	63.2	50.2	78.1	63.7
Psychological Violence	%	%	%	%
Emotional/Verbal				
Insulted	60.3	46.1	68.4	53.2
Humiliated	22.5	18.2	7.8	5.7
Called name of animal, etc.	34.4	28.0	30.3	24.5
Threatened to harm	14.5	10.2	15.7	11.3
Threatened to divorce	22.6	11.1	27.3	14.9
<i>At least one type of Emotional/Verbal</i>	61.3	47.7	75.2	60.9
<i>Two-three types of Emotional/Verbal</i>	27.6	23.5	55.0	31.0
Controlling/isolating				
Money taken by force	6.4	4.1	0.8	0.3
Prevented from health care	4.8	3.1	2.3	1.8
Prevented from going out of house	16.0	10.5	11.3	6.2
Prevented from visiting family	20.9	14.0	12.4	7.5
Prevented from going to work	3.8	2.4	5.6	2.7
<i>At least one type controlling/isolating</i>	29.2	19.7	25.2	14.9
<i>Two-three types controlling/isolating</i>	12.7	8.7	24.2	2.9
<i>At least one type of psychological</i>	62.6	49.5	77.7	63.4
<i>Five or more types of psychological</i>	15.0	9.1	6.5	2.3
Physical Violence	%	%	%	%
Kicked or dragged	24.8	13.7	27.9	11.1
Wounded/injured	13.8	8.0	4.9	2.3
Attempt to choke or burn	3.5	1.7	0.2	0.1
Attacked with a weapon	2.4	1.3	0.2	0.0
Broke bones	4.5	2.5	0.8	0.6
<i>At least one type of physical</i>	28.3	16.1	28.6	11.5
<i>Two - three types of physical</i>	10.1	6.1	4.4	2.2
Sexual Violence	%	%	%	%
Forced into sexual relations	17.3	13.8	0.4	0.3

Table 5 displays the responses of 640 married women who suffered psychological, physical or sexual violence by their brothers. Women's reaction to the abuse is that

between 85 and 90 percent get upset and cry and between 20 and 30 percent just silently or aloud curses at their brothers. Most Egyptian women do not seek assistance from the government or report the abuse to the authority.

Table 5: Responses of respondent married women who suffered spousal violence in the past 12 months by type of violence (National Council for Women, 2009, 37)

N Female Youth Who Suffered Violence from Brother	828
Reasons for Violence*	%
Not being obedient	62.3
Nervousness and anger	50.6
Mother complaining about daughter	40.5
Answering back	25.2
Going out without permission	14.6
N Male Youth Who Inflicted Violence on Sister	836
Reasons for Violence*	%
Nervousness and anger	61.2
Answering back	60.3
Not obeying father	51.6
Mother complaining about daughter	12.7
Going out without permission	10.5

* More than one answer so sum of percentages more than 100%.

Table 6 shows how domestic violence affects Egyptian women's body weight, psychological, physical, and sexual well-being. Domestic violence has severe and long-lasting negative health effect on some Egyptian women. Some women not only experience physical and sexual abuse but also experience the psychological effects, "Domestic violence against women has predicted immediate and long-lasting

psychological symptoms, including depression and life stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide ideation and related problems with sleep, appetite, energy and well-being. Various forms of violence against women have predicted disordered eating and weight-control practices, as well as poorer treatment outcomes for eating disorders” (Yount, 2010, 87). Abuse ruins the lives of the women that experience it, whether it is physical, sexual, or psychological.

Table 6: Characteristics of the sample, ever-married non-pregnant women aged 15–49 years, Egypt 2005 ($n=5015$) (Yount, 2010, 92).

	%	Mean	(SD)	Min	Max
Anthropometry					
BMI (kg/m^2)		30.4	(6.1)	13.4	57.9
Underweight, or $\text{BMI} < 18.5$	0.4				
Normal weight, or $18.5 \leq \text{BMI} < 25$	18.6				
Overweight, or $25 \leq \text{BMI} < 30$	32.6				
Obese, or $\text{BMI} \geq 30$	48.4				
Ever any domestic violence, by type					
Psychological (ref: never)	18.4				
Physical (ref: never)	33.9				
Sexual (ref: never)	6.8				
Psychological or physical (ref: never)	36.4				
Physical or sexual (ref: never)	34.5				
Psychological, physical or sexual (ref: never)	36.8				
No. of specific acts of domestic violence ever experienced					
Psychological (ref: never)		0.3	(0.6)	0.0	2.0
One	12.1				
Two	6.3				
Physical (ref: never)		0.8	(1.3)	0.0	7.0
One	9.7				
Two	12.1				
Three or more	12.2				
Sexual (ref: never)		0.1	(0.3)	0.0	1.0
Ever	6.8				
Psychological or physical (ref: never)		1.0	(1.7)	0.0	9.0
One	8.9				
Two	9.5				
Three or more	18.0				
Physical or sexual (ref: never)		0.9	(1.4)	0.0	8.0
One	8.9				
Two	11.2				
Three or more	14.4				
Psychological, physical or sexual (ref: never)		1.1	(1.8)	0.0	10.0
One	8.3				
Two	9.0				
Three or more	19.5				
Sociodemographic controls					
Age (years)		34.1	(8.6)	16.0	49.0
15–24	16.0				
25–34	34.7				
35–44	33.7				
45–49	15.6				
Age at first marriage (years)		19.4	(4.2)	9.0	42.0
9–16	25.4				
17–18	19.9				

Table 7 reports a study done by the UNICEF groups showing different of women's positions on domestic violence. Some women and adolescent girls think it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife. "Domestic violence is perceived as a private matter and many incidents remain unreported. Sadly, it also appears to be accepted by many women in Egyptian society: according to the 2008 DHS, 39% of women questioned agreed with at least one of a list of five 'reasons' justifying a man beating his wife. Limited support services are provided by women's rights NGOs and the quasi-governmental NCW. There are also some government-run shelters, but husbands and family members have access to these premises, and they function more as rehabilitation centers than refuges" (Tadros, 2010, 2).

Table 7: Attitudes towards Domestic Violence (UNICEF, 2011, 8)

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	YEAR	% WHO AGREE WITH AT LEAST ONE SPECIFIED REASON	SOURCE
Women (15-49) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)	2008	39	UNICEF global database/ DHS 2008
Adolescent girls (15-19) who think that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances (%)	2008	50	SOWC 2011/ DHS 2008

Domestic violence is not an open conversation in Egypt and some women find it shameful to speak about it or report it. Most women who are beaten never bring the

matter to the attention of the criminal justice system (Abd el-Wahhab, 1996, 70). Many women stay silent to the abuse they experience within their homes; however, there was a study conducted by The National Council on Population (1996) found that “husbands beat their wives for disrespecting them (60%), talking to strange men (15%), neglecting their children (10%), overspending (8%), or wanting to control their wealth and inheritance (5%); there are also miscellaneous 'other reasons' (5%)” (Abd el-Wahhab, 1996, 60). There should not be any justifiable reasons for a man to beat or abuse his wife at any given age. “The cycle of violence begins between the ages of 15 and 49 for women. Most often, the victims of domestic violence are wives, followed by fiancées, divorcees, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Abd el-Wahhab's study (1996) of domestic violence shows that the most common form of domestic violence is beating (71%), followed by burning (21%), and finally stabbing with a sharp instrument (20%)” (Abd el-Wahhab, 1996, 60).

According to Abd el- Wahhab, wives most frequently experience domestic violence, but men also abuse their fiancées, divorcees, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Some men show no sign of respect for any of the women in their lives whom they beat, burn, and stab. The obstacles encountered by some Egyptian women leave different gaps and challenges, “Women sometimes accept to be beaten by their fathers, husbands or brothers as they were led to believe that this is the right of men over women to punish them, especially in the case of disobedience. Cultural trends somewhat affect the fairness of some of the judiciary and the law enforcement which often results in women refraining from putting any complaint when they are battered” (National Council for Women, 2002,

9). Raising awareness might be the first step for some Egyptian women to understand and become educated about their rights.

Egyptian Women's stories about Domestic violence

Some women have shared their stories and experiences with domestic violence. Egyptian women experience violence for many different reasons from their spouse, father, and/or brothers. Some of the factors that trigger domestic violence are, "Money, sex, daily life quarrels can only be looked at as superficial triggers behind an assault. The root cause of domestic violence is often linked to negative societal attitudes towards women" (Shalaby, 2012, 1). Since many Egyptian males believe that women are inferior to them, they do as they please to the women in their lives.

Sharing stories or reporting domestic violence in Egypt is very difficult and not all women experience it. However, there are women who are brave enough to talk about their lives and how they deal with domestic violence. One woman explained why her husband beats on her, "If it happens that I refuse to give him money, I suddenly find him getting up with his belt, beating me on every part of my body. He grabs me by my hair and drags me on the floor in front of my children" (Shalaby, 2012, 2). This is a 32 year-old woman who finds it is her obligation to work and give all her money to her husband and if she refuses, he beats her and abuses her in front of her children. This does not only demonstrate physical abuse but also emotional abuse of the wife and children. Will the children grow up to believe that it is okay for a man to beat his wife? Are they going to be scarred for life? Would they refuse to get married because of how their father treated their mother? Domestic violence affects every person within the household directly or indirectly.

Nour (a woman who was interviewed) wants to leave her abusive household but talking about it to her family is taboo but when she mentions it to her brother, he denies her right to a divorce, “Whenever I speak with my brother about divorce and tell him that my husband beats me, he chides me and tells me I have to tolerate everything for the sake of my children” (Shalaby, 2012, 2). Her brother blames her and demands that she stay in the marriage for her children, instead of taking his sister’s side. How is staying in an abusive marriage beneficial for the children? In addition, no child wants to see his/her mother be abused by their father. Another woman tells her stories of domestic violence, “The 36 year old gets beaten by her husband before he rapes her. ‘Whenever he feels the desire, which is so frequent, you find him approaching me in an extremely violent way and ask me to undress myself. If I disapprove, I hear sexually explicit and vulgar statements and he starts throwing me around the room. Sometimes when I completely refuse to sleep with him, he beats me until I faint and then he starts the practice’” (Shalaby, 2012, 3). Marriage is a sacred sacrament and a husband should not rape his wife. Perhaps if he approaches her in a non-violent way, she would not deny him the act. Some of these women find it easier to talk to strangers (the interviewers) than their families, “Zeinab cannot ask for a divorce or reveal the real reasons for why her life is nearly impossible. ‘It is a very sensitive topic. I can’t even talk about it with anyone here. I started getting used to it’” (Shalaby, 2012, 3).

Wives are not the only women subjected to domestic violence; daughters find themselves at the mercy of their fathers. “Hend, who is 17, said she started carrying all the domestic burdens when her father and mother got divorced. If she ever woke up late for work her father would punch her repeatedly in the face. ‘My nose bled and I just

couldn't respond to him. He takes my money to gamble. My mother left the house, myself and my two brothers. I now feel I don't want to get married. Probably my husband will also beat me if I don't give him what he wants'" (Shalaby, 2012, 4). Hend does not have anywhere to turn to because her mother is out of the picture and she must do what her father says or he would beat and abuse her. This is a clear example of how children are scarred because of the abuse they experience as children. Hend does not want to get married because she is scared that her husband would beat her like her father did to her and her mother. This is a cruel cycle because the only way for her to leave her abusive household would be to get married.

Activists are speaking up on the topic of domestic violence and why they think some of the domestic abuse takes place. "Many women in Egypt suffer from what is called as an inferiority complex. 'They believe they are meaningless creatures and seal their mouths to many unacceptable attitudes,' said Rageh, who was the team leader for the 'Combating Violence against Women and Children' project that was effective from 2007 to 2012 under the supervision of the NCW" (Shalaby, 2012, 4). If at a young age women are being taught that they are the inferior sex, it becomes problematic for them to escape their abusive homes. However, speaking up about domestic violence is a start toward a solution. "Violence against women, whether occurring in the home, in the workplace, or more generally in the public sphere, is a cause for serious concern, according to numerous NGOs in Egypt. Unfortunately large gaps remain in our knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women... Most women refrain from reporting cases of abuse" (National Council for Women, 2002, 9). Violence against women is a major concern to some of the Egyptian women but it is more problematic

because not every woman reports her experiences with the different kinds of abuse. Once more reports are filed against abusers that can be a step towards more change and raising more awareness.

An Egyptian woman can escape her abuser only under certain circumstances.

There are shelters in Egypt open for victims of domestic abuse but there are certain qualifications for women to be admitted into the shelter.

The Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs operates four shelters for victims of violence in Egypt. Given that there are so few shelters in Egypt; one might expect them to be models of efficiency, helping as many women as possible. The opposite is true. In order to be eligible to stay in a shelter, a woman must meet a set of strict criteria set by the ministry. Specifically, she must be a divorced or widowed woman, be younger than fifty years of age, and be experiencing some familial difficulties. Unmarried victims of physical or sexual violence are not eligible for shelter. If a woman passes this initial screening, the shelter sends a social worker to the woman's home to verify this information, thereby potentially alerting the perpetrator of the violence to the woman's future whereabouts. If the woman has an income, the shelter requires her to donate a quarter of it (Mohsen, 2004, 3).

The shelters serve as a stepping stone for victims of domestic violence but there are flaws with the system of the shelters. The first flaw is that women have to be divorced or widowed to stay in the shelter and must be younger than the age of fifty. This is problematic because if a married woman is experiencing domestic violence from her husband, she cannot escape to the shelter. Second, unmarried victims are also not eligible, so where would they escape to? Third, if a woman is accepted into the shelter, a social worker would verify the situation which alerts the abuser. At that point, the abuser can harm his victim if she returns to the home.

Egyptian women must learn and understand their rights as citizens before they can take action and NGOs are assisting with that process. "Several NGOs are implementing programs on legal literacy to raise awareness of women and the whole society of

women's human rights” (National Council for Women, 2002, 14). In addition, some NGO's are working on implementing different programs to aid domestic violence victims.

The creation of institutions such as NCW, the Ombudsman Office, the Family Court and now the National Council for Human Rights is essential to monitor the observance of human rights as they act as human rights watch for the respective segments of population they are entrusted to protect. Better coordination between all such councils is a must. The Ombudsman through its database on complaints of violation of women's human rights has proved to play a major role in highlighting major abuses and suggesting several amendments to legislation. (National Council for Women, 2002, 14)

Once all the different groups collaborate together, there can be a consistent analysis of the domestic violence cases they encounter.

Raising awareness and providing programs and shelters are important for domestic violence victims. Nevertheless, in-depth studies are still needed for violence against Egyptian women because it is difficult for some Egyptian women to speak about their experience with domestic violence and sexual harassment. “Social and cultural inherited traditions, particularly in rural areas, deprive women of their human rights” (National Council for Women, 2002, 14). The NCW has a difficult time with their studies on violence against Egyptian women, “Data on violence against women is inadequate mostly as women do not speak out” (National Council for Women, 2002, 9). Some of the issues stem for the cultural background of Egypt, “Violence against women, whether occurring in the home, in the workplace, or more generally in the public sphere, is a cause for serious concern, according to numerous NGOs in Egypt. Unfortunately large gaps remain in our knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women. Due to cultural barriers, the data available does not reflect the reality. Most women refrain from reporting cases of abuse” (National Council for Women, 2002, 9). When Egyptian

women are able to speak up about their different experiences with violence, accurate data can be reported and examined and further action can be taken from NGOs and the legal system.

Conclusion

Many Egyptian women have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence and sexual harassment in the private and public spheres. As defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for the Human Rights; “Domestic abuse includes battering, sexual abuse of females in the household, marital rape, and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation” (Hessini, 2014, 1). To completely understand Egypt’s history of domestic violence, I traced back to the ruling of Mohammed Ali Pasha, followed by the period of British colonialism, continued with the reigns of Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Egypt’s legal system does not always favor Egyptian women, “The notion of family relationship as based upon complementary, rather than equal rights between men and women was foundation to such legal interpretation. The law upheld the authority of men as fathers and husbands with proprietary rights over women, based on their status as financial providers to the household” (Beir, 2014, 1). Egyptian men are held to a higher standard and they have the opportunity to have control over the women in their lives.

The revolution of 1952 ousted the British and the monarchs from Egypt, allowing Egypt to be governed by its own people. Changes in the legal system took place as Nasser became president, “In 1956, the Sharia and other confessional courts were abolished by Nasser regime as a means to bring religious communities more firmly under the control of the state” (Beir, 2014, 2). Nasser also put a ban on the Muslim Brotherhood once they failed in an assassination attempt. Thus began the fight of the

Muslim Brotherhood to have an influence on Egypt's legal system. Nevertheless, when Sadat took the presidency, he lifted the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood and made changes to Egypt's family law. "Named for Sadat's wife, 'Jihan's Law,' as it came to be popularly known, gave wives the right to keep the marital home in the event of a divorce and the right to be informed and granted a divorce if their husbands took another wife. The law was widely criticized, not only by Islamists who argue that the changes were contrary to Sharia, but by other leftist and secular opposition groups who objected to the authoritarian way the reforms had been enacted" (Beir, 2014, 2). As the timeline of the Egyptian presidents continued, during the reign of Mubarak, women gained the right to divorce their husbands. "In 2000, the Egyptian Parliament passed the Law on the Reorganization of Certain Terms and Procedures of Litigation in Personal Status Matters. Its provisions gave women the right to initiate a khula [divorce] in exchange for giving up her financial claims upon her husband, including the deferred part of her mahr (bride money)" (Beir, 2014, 2). The khula presented a new found freedom for some of Muslim women because these women can divorce their husbands without having to plead for a divorce (talaq). Nevertheless, Muslim men can still repeat divorce (talaq) three times and the woman is divorced. However, this does not apply to the Coptic Christian community because Copts are not permitted to get divorced. Divorce is only given under the circumstance of proven adultery or conversion to another religion. But in recent discussions with the new Pope, Tawadros II, Coptic women are trying to fight for more reasons for divorce especially in cases of domestic violence.

In recent times, Egypt went through two revolutions. The January 2011 revolution resulted in the ousting of President Mubarak. Following an interim military

government, Morsi then took the presidency as the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. President Morsi declared Egypt to be an Islamic state once again as Sadat had done during his reign. During the year of his presidency, Morsi wanted to implement the Sharia law “strictest law of Islam” on the entire nation. Many individuals saw that the Sharia law would not be beneficial for Egypt. “Basing the constitution directly on “Sharia law” would further constitute a quantum leap, taking Egypt back by centuries. Therefore women, according to his interpretation of Sharia law, need to be covered-up or locked-up” (Guindy, 2013, 1). The Sharia was not popular among many Egyptian women who saw it as a threat to rights they have gained from previous governments.

Egypt experienced another revolution after a year of Morsi’s reign and that resulted in the ousting of Morsi by el-Sisi who is currently the President of Egypt. During the two recent revolutions, many women in Egypt experienced public sexual harassment from the military and thugs; and the police looked the other way because in many cases they had hired those thugs. Following several particularly egregious cases, el-Sisi passed new laws incriminating individuals who engage in sexual harassment. As United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women reported “99.3% of Egyptian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment” (Abou-Bakr, 2013, 3). Women hope that this law will limit their experience of violence.

Religion plays a role in the occurrences of domestic violence but not because Islam and Coptic Christianity condone the abuse but because of the misinterpretation of the Quran and the Bible by some men. The teaching of the Quran and the Bible do not dictate for a husband, father, and brother to abuse any females in the household. Nevertheless, if a verse states, “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women” (The

Holy Quran, An-Nisa, 34) or “wives submit to your husbands” (Ephesians 5:22-24, KJV), some men interpret these verses as if they can do as they please to the women in their lives. Both religions do not excuse any form of violence against women.

Egyptian traditions are also factors that play a role in violence against women. Men are represented to be the head of the household as they have been the main providers for the family for ages in the Egyptian society. A tradition that exists in the Egyptian society is that women must remain virgins until they get married but Egyptian men do not have to follow the same standard. The women who defy this tradition are beaten by their father or brothers because the family views virginity as an honor. Some families also perform honor killings of women who have premarital intercourse. Some couples look for an alternative to premarital intercourse, and they marry urfi, but urfi also can result in violence and abuse from families because it is looked down upon. Another tradition is for Muslim women to wear the veil, if she refuses, her father or husband can beat her for not covering up. Some Egyptian women also experience marital rape that results in abuse and brutality. In addition, outside the home, sexual harassment takes places in the streets. So, whether women are in public or private spaces, they are experiencing violence.

Furthermore, Egyptian women experience violence for many other reasons, which include: neglecting the children, refusing to have sex with husband, burning the food, not being obedient, answering back, and going out without permission or without the consent of a husband, brother, or father. Due to the lack of education and awareness, women in rural areas show the highest experience with domestic violence and highest agreement

that husbands should have the right to beat their wives. However, some urban women are more educated and seek assistance from their families or other resources.

Domestic violence in Egypt is a topic that is not spoken about by many Egyptian women. “In a context of widespread social acceptance of domestic violence, women are not aware of their rights being violated and reluctant to speak out against perpetrators because of the stigma attached and their fear retribution” (Hessini, 2014, 1). Not all Egyptian women are aware that they have rights as equal citizens; therefore, they do not speak about as domestic violence because it is associated with shame and is considered a private family matter. As reported by the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey in 2005, “A third of women are physically abused by their husbands. Most victims suffer silently and don’t seek help to prevent or stop violence because they think it is a part of life or they are embarrassed by the abuse” (Monazea, 2014, 1). Also, some Egyptian women are suffering extreme side effects from their experience with violence. “The short-term health impacts for women include bruises and cuts, while the long-term sequels can involve chronic disabilities, mental disorders, pervasive fear and depression, and unwanted pregnancies” (Hessini, 2014, 1). Domestic violence has countless physical and psychological impacts on the victims and some can be life threatening, if the abuse becomes severe.

It becomes very difficult to gather specific data about the occurrence of domestic violence in Egypt due to the laws and traditional practices. “The absence of reliable data, the paucity of laws and policies that account for such violence and penalize its practices, and the poor training of medical providers and law enforcement agents to screen for violence all contribute to the hidden nature of domestic violence” (Hessini, 2014, 1).

However, it was the movement of the different NGOs that aided in raising awareness and assisting women in reaching out for help, “The interventions developed by women’s groups include: opening shelters to ensure women’s safety while assisting them with legal counsel; establishing hotlines to provide support for women and assistance in obtaining child custody; finding employment; and locating a home” (Hessini, 2014, 2). Even with the limitations and restrictions of the shelters and legal assistances; it was a step towards a way of escaping domestic violence and eventually ending submission to any form of abuse. In addition, if the government promotes awareness with the assistance of NGOs, domestic violence and sexual harassment can be overcome.

Using educational and communication tools to educate men and women and raise public awareness that violence against women is not legitimate or acceptable and has a negative impact on the health and well-being of women and their children; the messages have to be clear, scientific, and agreed upon by religious leaders. Improving girls' and boys' access to quality education and trying to raise the status of women in family and society. Providing health services and counseling for abused women that are integrated into existing maternal and child health services. Funding research to better understand the causes, magnitude, and forms of gender-based violence and to guide policies and prevention programs for men and women (Monazea, 2014, 4).

Violence against women whether it is in private (domestic violence) or public (sexual harassment) needs to come to an end in Egypt. Egyptian women must come together and fight for their rights and never submit to any form of abuse. It will take time before violence against Egyptian women disappears but there is always a new found hope that one day it will completely vanish.

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