

Perception of Domestic Violence against Women amongst Libyan Migrants in Manchester

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Abstract

We surveyed one hundred and seventy five Libyans in Manchester in order to assess their attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence against women (DVAW). Overall, 82% of the participants agreed that the definition of DVAW involves verbal abuse, economic abuse, threat to use violence, physical and sexual violence. Ninety-five percent agreed that if the husband shouts at his wife, curses her, pulls or pushes her, punches her, or breaks things in the house, these behaviours reflect DVAW. Unemployment (80%) and lack of material resources (70%) were the major perceived contributing factors regarding DVAW. We discuss the implications of the study and its limitations.

Keywords: domestic violence, patriarchy, family, gender, beliefs.

Domestic violence against women (DVAW) is a worldwide phenomenon and refers to the use of coercion in interpersonal relationships. DVAW occurs irrespective of class, nationality, race, religion and socio-economic development (WHO, 2005). Women worldwide suffer domestic violence and other forms of violence such as marital rape, incest, foeticide and sexual harassment, amongst others (Heise et al., 1999). The United Nations defines violence against women as: “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 in private life” (UN General Assembly, Article 1, 1993).

Patriarchy is singularly the most fundamental cause of women’s subordination in almost all societies and cultures around the world (Walby, 1990). Furthermore, feminists argue that the root of domestic violence against women lies in gender stratification (Bailey & Peterson, 1995; Bograd, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kalmuss & Straus, 1990; Walby, 1990; Yodanis, 2004). Muslim societies, in general, are patriarchal societies, in which gender inequality is present in economic, political and social spheres (Moghadam, 2004). Family law in many Muslim societies represents a gender imbalance; however, in practice, women are able to exploit the rules and existing loopholes to their advantage in order to alleviate inequality. For example, women can include articles into their marriage contract in order to safeguard them against their husband marrying a second wife or the division of assets after the divorce (Moghadam, 2005). The aims of this exploratory study are: 1) To understand the phenomenon of domestic violence amongst Libyans living in Manchester United Kingdom from the viewpoint of a sample of women and men from different social backgrounds. 2) To explore the attitudes and perception of Libyan people about domestic violence. 3) To investigate how social demographic factors influence the perception of domestic violence.

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The current study explores the perception and attitudes of the kinds of behaviour considered DVAW amongst Libyans living in Manchester.

1. DVAW in Europe and Britain

In a survey of perception of domestic violence in the European Union (EU), 78% of Europeans recognised that domestic violence is a common problem. Domestic violence persists in EU as one in four respondents across the EU said that they knew a woman among friends or in the family circle who was a victim of domestic violence. The findings showed an increase from 19% to 25% compared to a previous survey by Eurobarometer. The study also found that one in five respondents knew of perpetrator of domestic violence in their circle of friends and family (Eurobarometer, 2010). The most recent survey on the perception of domestic violence in the EU found that 74% of respondents thought DVAW is common in their country (Eurobarometer, 2016). Fifteen percent of respondent across the EU felt that DVAW is a private and family matter; Eastern Europeans shared this opinion largely. Twenty four percent of respondent knew about a friend or family member who had been a victim of DVAW, with 18% who knew of someone in their neighbourhood, and 10% who knew of someone at work; nevertheless, the majority did not speak about it to health and support services or the police. Respondents in Eastern areas of the EU are generally the least likely to have heard of the support services available to victims of DVAW. The public perception of domestic violence as a private issue is widespread in Eastern Europe. The beliefs about women's inferior position and the acceptability of violence against them have deep historical roots. In many Eastern European countries, combatting DVAW means protecting the family, and even professionals who deal with DVAW issues themselves perceive it as a private and family matter (UNIFEM, 2007).

The findings of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW, 2014) showed that 8.5% (estimated 1.4 million) of women and 4.5% (estimated 700,000) of men reported domestic abuse. The survey also reported that 28.3% of women and 14.7% of men had experienced domestic abuse since the age of sixteen. The figures showed a decline in domestic abuse between the 2004/2005 and 2008/2009 CSEW survey, whilst the present pooled figure of 6.5% for both sexes showed a steady trend since 2008/2009. Domestic abuse was more prevalent amongst women who were separated (22.1%). The likelihood of victimisation increased for both men (8.4%) and women (15.7%) with a long-term illness or disability. Women with a degree or diploma (7.1%) were less likely to be a victim of domestic abuse, compared to those with other qualifications. Living in the lowest income households, increased the likelihood of women to experience domestic violence compared to those within higher income brackets. There is a dearth of research on domestic violence in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, and the majority of the existing literature does not distinguish between the experiences of white and BME communities (Belur, 2008; Hester & Wesmarland, 2005; Humphreys & Thiara, 2002). McWilliams and Yarnell (2013) reported that specific barriers confront BME women in Northern Ireland who experience domestic violence, which are stopping them from getting help. These barriers included financial dependency on abusive partners and no access to public funds. Some BME women are dependent on their partners for their immigration status, and not knowing about their rights, an unwillingness to contact social service for fear of losing their children, pressure from their own communities, internalised religion and cultural beliefs that DVAW was permissible.

Ethnic minority women often do not disclose abuse because of culturally mediated factors such as shame, familialism and gender roles (Allen, 2012), compounded by additional stigmas and an unwillingness to acknowledge the problem (Bright, 2000). The high level of under-reporting of domestic violence is due to a number of factors, which need in-depth understanding of the contexts in which DVAW takes place (Hall & Wright, 2003). For example, for many BME women, shame as a societal control mechanism appears to have a powerful impact on the acknowledgement and reporting of violence. Gill (2004) found male honour could be a contributory factor in the under-reporting of domestic violence. Walby and Allen (2004) revealed that significant numbers of ethnic minority women did not report domestic violence to the police because they feared further violence, and that the situation would get worse because of police involvement, or fearing that nothing would result from police investigation. Mama (1989) found that even after the eviction of their violent partner, many women still felt unprotected and believed they were in even greater danger since the perpetrator would feel more vindictive towards them. Findings regarding the prevalence of physical and sexual violence by intimate partners vary greatly between studies.

This variation can be attributed not only to the differences in the levels of violence between settings but also to differences in research methods, definitions of violence, sampling techniques interviewer training and skills, and cultural differences that affect respondents' willingness to reveal intimate experiences (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Abused women tend to live within a cultural environment, which do not consider domestic violence as a problem (Ahmad et al., 2004; Dasgupta, 2005; Hicks, 2006). Tradition and culture of the ethnic group often inhibits women from reporting abuse in order to avoid humiliation (Kulwicki et al., 2010; McWilliams & Yarnell, 2013; Wellock, 2010). BME women have little trust in existing institutions because of experiences of racism and racial stereotyping of minorities (Belur, 2008; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Dasgupta, 2005). Duke and Cunradi (2011) found a strong relationship between domestic violence and socio-economic status. BME women who experienced social isolation, family disorder and continuing poverty as well as a lack of educational and employment opportunities were more likely to experience domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence are disadvantaged both in terms of the kind of service they receive and the inability of policing arrangements to deal with their needs (Belur, 2008). The risk of being a victim of domestic violence is higher for some BME communities. Asian women are often under a lot of pressure and feel guilty to report domestic abuse because of the fear of letting their family and community down, bringing shame and dishonour to their family and the community (Belur, 2008). Minority women experience higher rates of violence, male domination and control, and stay longer in abusive relationships (Condon et al., 2011). A survey of attitudes towards domestic violence within Camden's Asian communities found that the majority of respondents were aware of domestic violence and its different forms. The survey found economic abuse and control as a dominant form of domestic violence. The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the husband or partner was the most likely person to commit acts of domestic violence, followed by parents, siblings, in-laws and other relatives (Hopscotch, 2012). Understanding violence against South Asian women must be placed in the complicated intersection of race, ethnicity, and class (Rehman et al., 2013; Thiara & Gill, 2010).

2. Method

The researchers conducted a cross sectional surveys in 2012 with Libyans in Britain and 175 questionnaires were completed. The literature review and adaptation of previous studies (Haj-Yahya, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2002a, and 2002b) informed the development of the questionnaire. In the absence of a sampling frame, the study relied on collecting data by targeting postgraduate students at Salford University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, and other universities in the region. In addition, we approached teachers and parents of children attending Libyan weekend schools in Manchester, and at the same time, we made contacts with the Association of Libyan Women. We constructed the questionnaire in English and translated into Arabic. The questionnaire sought to identify definitions of DVAW, awareness of the issue, attitudes towards DVAW (e.g. justifications for or opposition to), beliefs about causes of violence, impact of violence on women and women's strategies for dealing with violence and abuse.

The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first part of the survey consisted of questions about the demographic and background characteristics of the sample in order to enable the researchers to collect data on the following topics: participants' gender, age, educational levels, occupation, family size, family's place of residence, family's average income, and employment status of the respondents in Libya, etc. The second section included general approaches toward the topic of violence against Libyan women. We asked the sample to rate the extent of their agreement or disagreement for each statement about definition of DVAW, and which types of behaviour occurring between a husband and wife would the participants consider to be covered by the term 'domestic violence against women'. In addition, we asked the participants to rate the extent of their agreement or disagreement about the social, economic and educational causes of DVAW.

In total, 175 questionnaires were completed, out of which 38% were males and 62% were female. The majority of respondents were aged between 31 and 50 years. Overall, 37% of the sample were single, 58% married and just over half of the sample (54%) came from large cities. The majority had received higher education training (53%) and 64% had lived in the UK for more than five years. Sixty five percent of the participants had worked in Libya prior to migrating to the UK, out of whom 56% had worked in teaching, professional and managerial occupations compared with 35% who did not. Forty nine percent of the participants in the sample worked in the UK at the time of the survey, compared to 51% who were unemployed.

Table I: Sample Characteristics (data in percentages)			
Marital Status	Male	Female	Total
Single	29.9	41.7	37.1
Married	68.7	51.9	58.3
Divorced	1.5	3.7	2.9
Widow	.0	2.8	1.7
Place of Residence in Libya			
Large cities	46.3	52.8	50.3
Small cities	53.7	47.2	49.7
Education			
No formal education	.0	.9	.6
Primary school	.0	1.9	1.1
Secondary school	25.4	56.4	44.8
Bachelor	13.4	29.6	23.1
MA's	46.3	7.4	22.3
PhD	14.9	3.7	8.0
Age			
20-30 years	13.4	36.1	27.4
31-40 years	38.8	33.3	35.4
41-50 years	35.8	25.9	29.7
51-60 years	11.9	3.7	6.9
60 years and above	.0	.9	.6
Length of residence in the UK			
Less than one year	1.5	3.8	2.9
1-5 year	34.3	32.1	32.9
6-10year	26.9	21.7	23.7
11-15 year	7.5	19.8	15.0
16-20 year	28.4	19.8	23.1
21-25 year	1.5	1.9	1.7
+26 Years	.0	.9	.6

The questionnaire included multiple items for measuring key concepts, which included multiple item scales on definition of violence, behaviours considered violence against women, perceived economic and social causes of violence against women, and educational and cultural reasons. In addition, we used a twelve-item scale to measure the perception of justification for the use of violence against women. In order to identify factors that respondents perceived to influence domestic violence towards women, it was necessary to create composite scales. The researchers created an index for the above-mentioned items by first investigating the consistency of each multiple scale item using reliability analysis. The scale used for the definition of violence included five items, which yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .772; hence a composite index was created by replacing all items with the mean score of all items. The behaviour scale included nine items with Cronbach Alpha .847. We used the same method to create all indexes. The economic reasons for the violence against women included six items with Cronbach Alpha .744. A nine-item scale made up the perceived social causes of violence yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .708. The scale measuring perceived educational and cultural reasons included four items with Cronbach Alpha of .648. Finally, the scale measuring the perception of justification of using violence against women included a twelve-item scale with the Cronbach Alpha .799. We used the resulting indexes to perform independent group comparisons. We used chi-square test of independence, and Mann-Witney test.

3. Definition of DVAW

We assessed Libyans' awareness of what might constitute domestic violence against women by asking them to express their agreement/disagreement with several statements.

Eighty two percent of the participants agreed with all statements that the definition of DVAW involves verbal abuse, economic abuse, threatening of using violence, physical violence and sexual violence.

Table II: Definition of DVAW (Data in percentages)

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
DVAW includes mental cruelty, including verbal abuse	87	5	8
DVAW includes being deprived of money and clothes.	91	5	4
DVAW includes being threatened with force or violence, even though no actual physical violence occurs.	74	13	13
DVAW includes physical violence that results in actual bodily harm.	95	1	4
DVAW includes sexual violence	88	6	6

Less educated women showed a higher tendency to agree with all the statements than less educated men did. Controlling for former place of residence in Libya, we found that women who came from large cities agreed more with all definitions of DVAW $\chi^2(1) = 7.215, p < .05$. There was also a significant association for women under 40 years of age, and agreement with definitions of DVAW, $\chi^2(1) = 8.605 p < .05$.

3.1 Behaviours Considered as being DVAW

When asked to state their views about behaviours considered as DVAW, overall, 57% of participants considered a 'husband forbidding his wife to leave the house alone' to be violence against her. Sixty-six percent felt denying money to the wife was a behaviour considered DVAW. The majority of the sample agreed that if the husband shouts at his wife, curses her, pulls or pushes her, punches her, or breaks things in the house, these behaviours should be considered as DVAW. In addition, 79% of the sample agreed that forced marriage is a type of DVAW. Only women who were aged less than 40 years were more likely to agree with all statements regarding behaviours considered as DVAW.

Table III: Behaviours Considered as DVAW (Data in percentages)

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The husband denies his wife access to household money.	66	19	15
The husband forbids his wife to go out of the house alone.	57	22	21
The husband shouts at his wife.	79	12	9
The husband curses his wife.	90	5	5
The husband pulls or pushes his wife.	94	2	5
The husband slaps his wife.	96	2	2
The husband punches his wife.	96	1	3
The husband breaks things in the house.	83	10	7

Approximately 74% of respondents agreed with all the above statements in relation to behaviours considered as DVAW.

3.2 Beliefs about the Economic Causes of DVAW

We asked a set of questions about the participants' perceptions of possible economic reasons for DVAW.

Table IV: Economic Causes of DVAW (Data in percentages)

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Women who earn more than men are more likely to become victims of domestic violence.	32	35	33
Women who keep on demanding money from men are likely to become victim of domestic violence.	36	29	35
Women depending on men for food, shelter and other material things are more likely to become victims of domestic violence.	41	21	38
Unemployed men tend to get frustrated and depressed, which lead to domestic violence.	80	13	7

We also explored the relationship between economic causes of DVAW and gender, education, and place of residence in Libya.

Table V: Relationship between Economic Causes of DVAW and Key Independent Variables.

DV(s)	IV (s)	X ² (df)
Women earn more	Gender	14.5895(1) ***
Women demanding money	Gender	5.895(1) *
Women depending on men	Gender	13.195(1) ***
Women earn more	Education	7.934(1) *
The lack of resources	Education	7.164(1) *
Women avoid giving their earning	Residence in Libya	6.905(1) *

Note. DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable. * $P < .05$. *** $P < .001$.

Respondents perceived that women were more likely to become victim of domestic violence under the following circumstances: if they earn more than men do, depending on men for food, shelter, and other material things, as well as demanding money from their husbands. There was also a statistical significant relationship between education and when women earn more than men earn, lack resources and avoid giving their earnings to their husbands. There was also a statistical significant relationship between the original place of residence in Libya and the statement, 'situations where women do not give away their earnings to men can cause DVAW'. The participants in this sample who came from large cities were more likely to agree with the statement compared with those from small towns. Exploring the relationship between the economic reasons for DVAW and socio-demographic variables, we found a relationship between gender and perception of economic reasons for violence: more females (38%) agreed with the economic reasons of DVAW than did males (21%), $\chi^2(2) = 8.747, p < 0.05$. When education was included as a control variable, however, the relationship disappeared for those who were less educated. When place of residence was introduced as a control variable, the relationship between gender and economic causes of violence did not hold for those from small cities. Marital status influenced the perceived relationship between gender and economic causes of violence for those who were single. Once the variable 'having children or not' was used as control variable; the significant relationship between gender and economic causes of violence only held for women with children.

3.3 Socialisation Factors in DVAW

Witnessing domestic violence have been emphasised as one of the risk factors of DVAW (Schissel, 2000). Investigating participants' perceptions of the socialisation factors for violence, we asked respondents to rate their agreement with the statement: 'boys who witness their fathers' violence towards their mothers were more likely to be violent when they grow up'. Our finding showed that about 80% of the participants (this included 42% women and 32% men) agreed with the statement. According to their educational levels, 48% of highly educated men and 43% of highly educated women agreed with the statement, meaning that participants' educational levels influenced respondents' attitudes. The result also indicated that gender could be more important in relation to the participants' attitudes towards DVAW, as 54% of less-educated women agreed with the statement compare with approximately 14% of less-educated men. Respondents who were aged 40 years and over tended to agree that boys who witness their fathers' violence towards their mothers are more likely to be violent when they grow up. There was a significant statistical relationship between marital status and the factor that boys who witness their fathers' violence towards their mothers are more likely to be violent when they grow up. The results shows that about 93% of married participants agreed with this statement, compared to those who were single, divorced or widowed, $\chi^2(1) = 6.580, P < .05$. There existed a significant statistical association between the independent variable working in Libya and the socialisation factor of DVAW $\chi^2(1) = 11.889, P < .05$. Participants who worked in Libya showed a higher tendency to agree (93%) than those who did not work in Libya. Compared to less-educated participants, highly educated participants felt that boys who witness their fathers' violence towards their mothers are more likely to be violent when they grow up, $\chi^2(1) = 19.226, P < 001$.

3.4 Social/General and Interpersonal Reasons for DVAW

We asked respondents to indicate their agreement and disagreement with the following statements. Fifty eight percent of the sample agreed with all the statements.

Table VI: Social and General Causes of DVAW (Data in percentages)

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. Drugs and alcohol dependence can lead to domestic violence.	93	4	3
2. Boys who witness their fathers' violence towards their mothers are more likely to be violent when they grow up.	80	8	12
3. The inherent inequality between male and female in society leads to violence.	67	14	19
4. The tolerance of DVAW leads to a recurrence of it.	75	14	11
5. Men are usually aggressive and controlling by nature.	33	24	43
6. Lack of awareness of women's rights and laws increases the likelihood of violence.	68	17	15
7. Sometimes violence is a way of showing affection.	20	22	58
8. Early marriage is one of the manifestations of domestic violence.	31	28	41
9. When women refuse to have sex with her husbands, this leads to violence.	58	24	18

Regarding the 'social causes of DVAW', men showed a higher tendency than women did to agree with these factors in causing DVAW. The participants considered 'drug and alcohol abuse' as a major factor influencing DVAW.

Table VII: Social and General Causes of DVAW by Gender (Data in percentages)

	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Drug and alcohol dependence can lead to domestic violence.	80.6	57.7	17.9	34.6	1.5	7.7
The inherent inequality between male and female in society leads to DVAW.	24.6	25.5	49.2	45.9	26.2	28.6
Tolerance of DVAW leads to its recurrence.	40.3	47.1	41.8	28.4	17.9	24.5

We explored the relationship between gender and educational Level of respondent by social and general causes of DVAW.

Table VIII: Gender and Educational Level of Respondent by Social and General Causes of DVAW (Data in percentages)

Educational level	Gender	Drugs and alcohol dependence can lead to domestic violence.		The inherent inequality between male and female in society leads to DVAW.		Tolerance of DVAW leads to its recurrence.	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Below Degree	Male	64.7	0.0	25.0	18.8	29.4	17.6
	Female	50.8	11.5	18.5	35.2	38.3	38.3
Degree and above	Male	80.6	1.5	24.6	26.2	40.3	17.9
	Female	57.7	7.7	25.5	28.6	47.1	24.5

Educational level was important in shaping the respondents' attitudes towards the social causes of DVAW. Approximately 97% of highly educated respondents agreed that drug and alcohol dependence could lead to domestic violence. This reflects 45% of well-educated women and 52% of well-educated men tended to agree with this statement, compared to 67% of less-educated women and 21% of less-educated men. Furthermore, 75% of well-educated respondents agreed that gender inequality in society as a factor in causing DVAW. This reflects 37% of well-educated men and of better-educated women tended to agree with this factor. Less-educated women (43%) and 16% of less-educated men agreed that gender inequality in society is a reason for DVAW. According to their education, 87% of highly educated respondents and 63% of less-educated respondents agreed that tolerance of violence leads to its recurrence. The findings reveal that less-educated women (46%) agreed with the statement more than less-educated men (17%). However, the percentage was almost equal (44%) for both well-educated men and women who agreed that tolerance of violence leads to its recurrence.

3.5 Educational and Cultural Reasons for Violence against Women

We questioned participants' perceptions of possible educational and cultural reasons for DVAW.

Table IX: Educational and Cultural Causes of DVAW by Gender

	Agree		Disagree	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Lack of education of women is a cause of domestic violence.	28.4	38.9	52.2	28.7
Misinterpretation of religious texts in which men have rights to use DVAW in order to correct women.	52.2	58.3	38.8	25.9
Low educational level of men leads to domestic violence.	61.2	52.8	23.9	30.6
Highly educated women are more likely to suffer domestic violence.	37.3	40.7	38.8	33.3

There was a statistically significant relationship between the place of residence in Libya, and the index of educational and cultural causes of DVAW, $\chi^2(2) = 11.834, P < .05$. Participants from larger cities are more likely to agree with educational and cultural causes for DVAW than those who came from small towns. There was also an association between educational and cultural causes of DVAW, and the age of respondents $\chi^2(2) = 7.612, P < .05$, indicating participants who were aged less than 40 years were more likely to agree with statements regarding educational and cultural causes of DVAW, compared with participants aged 40 years and above.

4. Perceptions of the Prevalence and Occurrence of DVAW in the Sample

We did not ask participants directly about their own experiences of violence in the survey due to the sensitivity of this topic. Therefore, we concentrated on obtaining their opinions and views about the occurrence of DVAW within Libyan communities.

Table X: Perceptions of the Prevalence and Occurrence of DVAW by Gender (data in percentages).

	Yes		No	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Do you think Libyan women suffer from DVAW?	89.6	91.7	10.4	8.3
Do you think that the level of DVAW has increased recently in Libya communities?	79.1	72.2	20.9	27.8
Has any woman in your family/friend suffered from domestic violence?	44.8	63.9	55.2	36.1

Men and women in the sample were in close agreement concerning the first two questions, however, their differed significantly concerning the third question.

5. Comparing groups

Definitions of domestic violence for respondents with educational levels below degree level ($Mdn= 1.80$) significantly differed from those with degrees and above ($Mdn= 1.60$), $U = 3081.500, Z = -2.19, P < .05$, with a small effect size $r = -.17$. Definitions of violence for respondents aged 40 and less ($Mdn= 1.8$) differed significantly from those aged above 40 ($Mdn= 1.6$), $U = 2944, Z = -1.97, P < .05$, with a small effect size $r = -.15$. Social and cultural reasons for violence for people from larger cities ($Mdn= 10$) significantly differed from the ones from the small cities ($Mdn = 7$), $U = 2920, Z = -2.73, P < .005$, with a small effect size $r = -.21$. Social and cultural reasons for violence for respondents without children ($Mdn = 9$) differed from the ones with children ($Mdn= 8$), $U = 3047.500, Z = -2.290, P < .05$, with a small effect size $r = -.17$. Social causes of violence for respondents with educational levels below degree level ($Mdn=2.38$) significantly differed from respondents with degrees and above ($Mdn=2.13$), $U = 2999.500, Z = -2.320, P < .05$, with a small effect size $r = -.17$. Social causes of violence for respondents from large cities ($Mdn = 2.13$) differed significantly from respondents from small cities ($Mdn= 2.50$), $U = 2420, Z = -4.12, P < .001$, with a medium effect size $r = -.31$. Economic causes of violence for males ($Mdn = 2.67$) differed significantly from females ($Mdn = 2.33$), $U = 2624, Z = -3.06, P < .005$ with a small effect size $r = -.23$. Economic causes of violence for respondents from large cities ($Mdn= 2.33$) differed significantly to those from smaller cities ($Mdn = 2.50$), $U = 3111, Z = -2.145, P < .05$, with a small effect size $r = -.16$.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore Libyans' perception of DVAW using a cross-sectional survey. Respondents' levels of education influenced their perception of violence. Domestic violence against women is a global phenomenon and it is not restricted to North Africa and developing regions.

Scholars and policy makers around the world have not paid enough attention to DVAW in black and ethnic minority communities in the West as well as women in developing regions. DVAW continue to be perceived as a private matter in the Middle East and North Africa, including Libya, and the concern of the family to deal with in order to avoid family humiliation and social stigma. Like their BME counterparts in the UK and Ireland, Libyan women often do not disclose abuse because of culturally mediated reasons, and it might further be coalesced by additional stigmas and an unwillingness to acknowledge the problem. Family honour and shame act as a powerful mechanism of social control, which has a powerful impact on the recognition and reporting of violence. Religious belief, tradition, and culture often hinder women from reporting abuse. Victims of DVAW are deprived, both in terms of the kind of service they receive, and the ineptitude of policing procedures to deal with their needs.

Eighty five percent of well-educated respondents perceived DVAW as including verbal abuse, economic control, threatening behaviour, actual physical and sexual violence. Less-educated women had a better perception than their opposite sex. Libyans who lived and grew up in larger cities had more awareness of the definitions of DVAW than their small town counterparts did. In addition, those below the age of 40 showed more agreement with definitions of DVAW. With regard to behaviour, respondents largely perceived physical acts as representing DVAW, compared to non-physical acts of leaving the wife at home alone or denying money. Women under the age of 40 were more likely to agree that physical as well as non-physical acts, just mentioned, constitute DVAW. Women's financial dependency, unemployment and lack of material resources, women who earned more than men, using drugs and consuming alcohol, tolerance of violence, and children socialisation were the key contributing factors to DVAW.

6.1 Limitations

First, due to the lack of a sampling frame, and that the target population was scattered over a wide geographical area, the results could not be generalised. In addition, the sample was overrepresented with people with higher educational qualifications and females. In addition, the length of time residing in the UK very much influenced respondents perception of DVAW. The strength of this study is that it is to the best of our knowledge, the first of its kind and provides insights into the attitudes of Libyans regarding violence against women. Violence against women is a very sensitive issue in both traditional and transitional societies. Libya is a country, which, by its very nature, is traditional whilst recently undergoing a massive transition as the result of the Arab Spring. The overthrow of Qaddafi by the opposition forces with the aid of NATO military intervention has not brought about a stable and democratic society. Libya lacks a strong centralised government as the result of growing power and support for militia groups, who already enjoying their share of control over the country. The new regime is in the process of changing the achievements of the past, as the new legislations will help to marginalise women further. This is evident from women's parliamentary representation, which reported a 16.5% female share after the 2011 election (Moghadam, 2014).

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