

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

**Towards a More Inclusive Understanding: An  
Intersectional Exploration of Domestic Violence in  
Algeria**

By

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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# DEDICATION

To the people I love the most—my devoted family—this dissertation is dedicated. I will always be indebted to my parents, Difi Belkheir and Smail Oum Elkheir, whose steadfast support and relentless advocacy have served as the cornerstones of my academic career. This success is due to your efforts and your faith in me. Thank you for being my inspiration and encouragement during the entire process, sisters Dalal, Maroua, and Kouathar, brothers Ahmed, and Amine. You have all been a continual source of strength for me. My greatest comfort comes from your support and unfailing affection. I could not have overcome the difficulties involved in earning an academic degree without your emotional support. I appreciate your time and tolerance, as well as your comprehension and unwavering love.

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# Towards a More Inclusive Understanding: An Intersectional Exploration of Domestic Violence in Algeria

Safa Difi

## **ABSTRACT**

While domestic violence is a prevalent phenomenon in Algeria, little do we know about the dynamics of gender inequality that shape the experiences of women subjected to violence. Through an intersectional lens, this thesis endeavors to investigate the way in which gender and the socio-economic status of the victims interact with the hegemonic social mindset and cultural norms in determining the trajectory of their experiences with domestic violence. To address this gap in the literature, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with victims of abuse from heterogenous backgrounds in the province of Djelfa. The findings reveal that the interplay of gender and social power imbalances produce interlocking socioeconomic factors of privilege and oppression that impact women's experiences and their coping mechanisms with domestic violence. Finally, this thesis suggests the urgent need for implementing a multidimensional approach to designing policies and intervention measures to protect women from domestic violence, that takes into consideration the heterogeneous nature of the victims' backgrounds.

Keywords: Gender, Domestic Violence, Intersectionality, Algeria, Gender Inequality, Victims of Domestic.



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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GBV.....	Gender Based Violence
IPA.....	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IPV.....	Intimate Partner Violence

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 A Global Perspective on Gender-Based Violence: Enhancing Understanding**

Albeit the contemporary neoliberal world is characterized by human rights protection, gender-based violence, against women and girls in particular, is a grave phenomenon of continuous prevalence worldwide. Gender-based violence is an umbrella term that refers to any deliberate violent acts towards a person based on their gender. Generally, the term is used to refer to the harmful practices committed toward women. Manifestations of such practices are - but not restricted to infanticide, child and forced marriage; rape and sexual harassment; honor killing; female genital mutilation; trafficking for sexual abuse, and most commonly intimate partner violence (Ann Kangas et al., 2014). According to SDG indicators (2018), violence against women and girls, in fact, takes place in both the public and private spheres. It takes several forms including but not limited to sexual, physical, psychological, and financial assault. More specifically, the United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women refers to the term 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 (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993).

Violence against women has both short- and long-term harm on the well-being of the survivors. It can cause both physical and mental impairment (UNICEF, 2020). Female survivors of physical assault experience bruises, and sprained or broken wrists which result in living with chronic diseases such as arthritis, chronic pain, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, heart problems, involuntary shaking and even a permanent disability when subjected to brutal beating (Office on Women's Health, 2015). In the same vein, the impact of violence on the mental health of women is devastating. Women who endure physical, emotional, and mental abuse tend to suffer from Post-traumatic stress disorder (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2022). This may include depression; drug and alcohol addiction; severe anxiety; nightmares and even having suicidal thoughts (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2022).

Gender based violence is the most pronounced expression of power imbalances between genders, particularly men and women. It is crucial to highlight the fact that there is no single factor to explain GBV and no reason to attribute it to certain aspects related to the victim (Council of Europe, 2014). Nevertheless, some cultural, legal, and political factors can, in fact, lead to and motivate the frequent occurrence of such barbaric behavior (Council of Europe, 2014). With respect to culture, GBV is reinforced in patriarchal societies whereby men hold more power over women and is usually justified by sexist social norms (Namyet al., 2017). For instance, domestic violence is driven by the consideration of family as a private sphere ruled by the male figure. In the same vein, honor killing crimes continue to take place on the claim of the ownership of the female body by the male guardian as his property and the understanding of women's sexuality as the family's honor (Mayell, 2002; Jiwani, 2014; Cetin, 2015; Loza, 2022). Another cultural aspect is the normative expectation of masculinity whereby men are naturally seen as violent and thus have the tendency to act violently to claim their masculinity

(Whittaker, 2019). From the legal perspective, whilst GBV is criminalized globally with the exception of 49 countries with no specific laws to penalize GBV, such crimes still go unreported due to the fact that such laws are deficient to protect the victims from their perpetrators (World Bank, 2017). In regard to the political aspect, following the underrepresentation of women in governmental bodies in charge of enacting laws coupled with the dominance of male figures in positions of power, gender-based violence is given little attention by decision-makers. Hence, advocates of women's rights campaigns calling for a policy to gender equality are very likely to remain a mere discourse (Council of Europe, 2014).

The rates indicating incidents of violence perpetuating the female gender are alarming. According to the World Bank, Gender Based Violence affects one out of every three women and an estimation of 35% of females do experience several forms of GBV on a daily basis (World Bank, 2021). Despite the fact that GBV is a global phenomenon, the frequency of its occurrence varies from one culture to another. In the Arab world, the figures reporting the occurrence of incidents of violence against women, either in the private or the public sphere, are staggering. According to WHO, it is estimated that 37% of women are subject to several forms of violence in the MENA region (Ann Marie Bissessar & Huggins, 2021). Such a high rate of violence against women in Arab nations does, in fact, reflect the issue of gender imparity whereby patriarchal social norms still persist and continue to govern the society, advantaging the male gender and disadvantaging the female gender. In this regard, gender-based violence is not only aggressive actions committed against women, but it is also deeply rooted in gender inequality and power imbalance between males and females. In other words, it is motivated by the socially assigned gender disparities between men and women.

## **1.2 Domestic Violence in Algeria: The Legal and Social Contexts**

In the Arab world wherein masculinity persists and patriarchy dictates the social norms, the phenomenon of violence against women is a daily occurrence, and Algeria is no exception. During the pandemic outbreak, Algeria witnessed an alarming upsurge in the rate of physical violence against women to hit nearly 8000 cases in 2021 according to the Directorate General of National Security and the Gendarmerie. It should be noted that these figures represent only the tip of the iceberg as many cases remain unreported (Algeria Press Service, 2021). With respect to femicide, there are no official statistics to report such crimes released by the security authorities to report such crimes. Nevertheless, according to figures from the Féminicide Dz platform- the only source of data on crimes committed against women either by their intimate partner, son, father, brother, or any other male figure, Algeria recorded in 2020 a total number of 75 femicides and another 54 cases before the end of 2021(Féminicides DZ, 2021).

### **1.2.1 Understanding Algeria's Legal Framework for Violence against Women: A Closer Look**

Legally speaking, Algeria's constitution provides for gender equality as ART 37 reads,

All citizens shall be equal before the law and shall be guaranteed the right to equal protection. There shall be no pretext for discrimination on the basis of birth, race, gender, opinion, or any other personal or social condition or situation (Algeria Constitution, 2020).

It is worth noting that in 1996, the gas-rich state ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with reservations to four articles, namely Article 2 related to discrimination against women; Article 15

referring to freedom of mobility and residence; Article 16 with respect to family matters; and Article 29 related to disagreements on the interpretation of the convention terms (EuroMed Rights, 2021). There was also a reservation to Article 9 stating granting women the right to pass their nationality to their children, yet it was withdrawn in 2005 as Algerian women were granted an equal right to men to pass on citizenship to their offspring. Amidst substantial efforts from national associations and lobbying groups of women's rights advocates who led the collective "Stop à la violence! Les droits aux femmes maintenant", in December 2015, the parliament passed a law criminalizing domestic violence (Ghorbani, 2015). Law No. 15-19 read as follow: "Whoever willfully causes an injury or beating their spouse shall be punished with imprisonment from one year to 20 years, according to the severity of the injury. In the event of death, the penalty is life imprisonment" (GSG Algeria, 2023). The new legislation also stipulated that the husband be imprisoned from a term that spans from six months to two years for "Anyone who practices any form of coercion or intimidation against his wife in order to dispose of her property or financial resources" (GSG Algeria, 2023). And for the first time, harassment of women was included in the Penal Code and stipulated of between two to six months or a fine against "Anyone who harasses a woman in a public place with any act, word or sign that offends her modesty" (GSG Algeria, 2023).

Nevertheless, this law is deficient in many areas. First, it does not protect the female victim from the male perpetrator; therefore, many women refrain from filing a complaint against their offender out of their fear of unsafety. Furthermore, victims are required to present evidence of assault that is a medical report issued by a forensic doctor approving physical harm, to act legally. Whilst the harm caused by physical assault is visible and can be examined by physicians, in many cases the abuser causes serious mental problems whereby the victim suffers anxiety, post-traumatic disorder, and develop suicidal thoughts.



Moreover, the felon can benefit from a reduced sentence and even escape the penalty if pardoned by the victim (Ghanem, 2021). The law does not take into account that the pardon is usually not consensual but rather resulted from the family's pressure on the victim (Ghanem, 2021). It should be noted that Law no.15-19 does not address the issue of the shortage of shelters for victims of domestic violence. In a nation of 44 million inhabitants with 58 states, only two government-run shelters host women victims of violence (The Regional Civil Society Observatory, 2021). Furthermore, many women are not aware of the amendment of this law; as a result, they do not lodge complaints against their abusers and continue to endure assault, unaware of the legal criminalization of domestic violence. Hence, the phenomenon continues to take place.

### **1.2.2 Exploring the Social Roots of Domestic Violence in Algeria**

Socially speaking, patriarchy and male supremacy are fundamental in Algeria. Regardless of their roles as daughters, sisters, mothers, or wives, women are always subordinate to the governance of the male figure in their families—who might be a father, brother, husband, or any other male relative. Accordingly, the phenomenon of gender-based violence is usually linked to the social status of women in the traditional social structure, where Algerian women occupy a lower status than men (Babou, 2019). This is due to the dominance of the historical and cultural heritage based on the position of women to a lower degree than that of men in a social formation that determined the status of each gender in advance. Such social roles are taught from the very beginnings of social upbringing with an emphasis on not exceeding the limits drawn for every gender. The patriarchal system, which was prevalent in the traditional social structure and still prevails among the large majority of Algerian families in the modern social structure, has granted men the full power to own and control women. This, in fact, has enshrined some

superficial concepts that made Algerian women without agency to the extent that their social existence has become determined by their submission and obedience to the authority of men. The prevailing values, customs, and traditions in Algerian society have played a determining role in shaping the inferior and underestimated social image of women (Babou, 2019). Algerian women, then, under the patriarchal system, occupied the position of the oppressed and inferior human being. This oppression takes several forms that are clarified in men's authority within the family. The patriarchal family system leaves ample space for men to practice their authority with regard to their wife, sister, and daughter, on the grounds that he is the master and decision maker within the family. Unfortunately, women, in Algeria, are still subjected to violence in the name of what is known as masculinity (Babou, 2019). A woman's body is still a site for family honor which the male members of the family claim the right to protect from stigma. For instance, it is very common for a daughter to be severely battered by her father or even a brother to discipline her and preserve family honor. Similarly, it is widely recognized that a husband assaults his spouse if she disobeys him. That being said, violence against women is normalized in Algeria and continues to take place.

### **Positionality**

As a scholar investigating the phenomenon of domestic violence in Algeria, I, Safa Difi, am cognizant that my personal experiences have shaped my perception of this topic. Having endured domestic violence first-hand, I have developed a deep appreciation of the multifaceted and intricate nature of this pervasive social issue. Moreover, my experiences as a member of the Algerian social community have compelled me to navigate my mobility rights with my father to obtain permission to travel alone as a single woman. Furthermore, as a witness to second-hand domestic violence through my female relatives, I recognize the intersectionality of this issue and the significance of social and financial

privilege in empowering women to escape violent environments. These experiences have profoundly influenced my perspective and approach to this research, and I am committed to ensuring that my findings are informed by the lived experiences of women who encountered domestic violence in Algeria.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Contrary to what is widely believed, women's experiences with domestic violence are not homogenous but rather heterogeneous and the occurrence, frequency, and intensity of which are subordinate to socioeconomic factors and cultural aspects. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the intersectional experiences of Algerian women victims of marital family and birth family violence, as well as their coping strategies, access to justice, and experiences with the judicial system. Accordingly, it asks the following research question:

- How does the intersection of gender, social background, and economic status, operate and shape the experiences of Algerian women subjected to domestic violence?

This research question is supported by sub-questions:

1. What are the different forms of domestic violence experienced by Algerian women and how do they vary based on social background and economic status?
2. What cultural and societal attitudes exist in Algeria that impact the experiences of women who are victims of domestic violence, and how do these attitudes intersect with gender, social background, and economic status?
3. How do Algerian women perceive and cope with domestic violence in their marital family and birth family contexts?
4. How do Algerian women who experience domestic violence navigate social, economic, and cultural barriers to seeking help or leaving abusive relationships?

5. What resources and support systems are available to Algerian women who are victims of domestic violence, and how do their intersectional social backgrounds impact their access to these resources?
6. How do the intersectional backgrounds of women subjected to domestic violence affect their access to justice and what are their experiences with the judicial system?

This thesis argues that the experiences of Algerian women with domestic violence are diverse and complex, and are shaped by intersecting factors such as their gender, socioeconomic backgrounds as well as certain societal and cultural contexts. More specifically, it contends that the intersectionality of these factors can result in differential and compounded forms of violence and marginalization that the existing legal framework has not adequately addressed. Hence, women with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds continue to face significant barriers to accessing effective legal protections and support against domestic violence. Wherefore, this thesis highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of violence against women and calls for the implementation of an intersectional approach to domestic violence policy and law in Algeria.

### **1.3.1 The Rationale of the Present Research**

Previous research on domestic violence in Algeria has primarily focused on the physical form of domestic violence perpetrated by IPV and has treated domestic violence as a homogeneous phenomenon. Hence, there is little research available on the experiences of Algerian women who encounter family-of-birth violence, which includes abuse committed by relatives other than a spouse. Given that family-of-birth violence is a common and underreported type of domestic abuse in Algeria, this gap in the research is especially alarming. Furthermore, the intersectional experiences of Algerian women who

encounter domestic abuse have not been adequately investigated by previous studies. More specifically, former research has not explored how the intersectionality of women's identities, such as their social background and economic status shape their experiences with domestic violence, their access to justice as well as support services. That being said, the purpose of the present study is to fill a gap in the literature by examining the experiences of Algerian women who are victims of both marital and natal family violence, as well as to examine the intersectionality of women's identities and how it affects the way they experience domestic violence, the coping mechanisms and strategies they adopt, and their access to justice and support. By concentrating on these factors, this study can help create more sophisticated and successful policies and interventions to stop and address domestic violence in Algeria.

### **1.3.2 The Significance of the Present Study**

The present study is significant for a couple of reasons. To begin with, it aims to understand the various factors that contribute to domestic violence in different cultural contexts and thus it contributes to a growing body of literature exploring the issue in Algeria. Additionally, it sheds light on the heterogeneity of women's experiences with domestic violence. Contrary to the widespread beliefs that women's experiences with domestic violence are homogeneous, this study demonstrates that the prevalence, frequency, and degree of violence are all influenced by socioeconomic and cultural factors. This research, then, challenges basic preconceptions about women's experiences with domestic violence and emphasizes the need for individualized and tailored interventions that take into consideration women's distinct intersectional identities. Moreover, it is relevant because it investigates the coping techniques adopted by women who have experienced domestic abuse. A thorough understanding of such strategies allows the researcher to identify the factors that contribute to women's resilience as well as the

barriers that prevent women from seeking help. Based on the insights from the survivors' intersectional experiences, the findings may be leveraged to create more efficient interventions and support systems. Furthermore, the potential for this research is to assist policymakers and practitioners in creating more effective methods for preventing and reacting to domestic violence.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Violence against women is a pervasive issue worldwide. A considerable body of research was conducted in various settings to investigate such a perilous phenomenon. Notwithstanding, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding violence against women in the domestic sphere. In Algeria, despite the alarming prevalence of this serious phenomenon, there is a scarcity of research on this issue, leaving a critical gap in comprehending the nature and lethal impact of domestic violence on the wellbeing of women.

### **2.1 Previous Research in Non-Arab Regions**

Domestic violence is a complicated and multifaceted problem, impacted by a variety of cultural, social, and economic elements, according to research carried out in many parts of the world. Therefore, studying domestic violence in different cultural contexts is essential to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. In this section of the literature review, I provide an overview of the current research on domestic violence in non-Arabic regions across the world.

In their salient study, Matthews and Selebano (2020) examined the phenomenon of violence against women with a focus on investigating the contributing factors to its frequent occurrence in Northern Namibia. Through a process of thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with twelve women, the authors identified four key themes that emerged from the interviews. This includes kinds of violence whereby violence can take several forms including but not limited to sexual, physical, and emotional violence;

commencement of abusive behavior; drivers of physical violence; and the psychological and physical ramifications of domestic violence on the victims (Matthews & Selebano, 2020). Another noteworthy result regarding the driving elements of GBV disclosed that ‘inferiority complex’, ‘alcohol addiction’, ‘outrage’, ‘miscomprehension’, and ‘adultery’ did contribute to a great extent to the act of GBV among the population studied (Matthews & Selebano, 2020). Furthermore, the findings revealed that GBV has a range of detrimental effects on both the victim mothers and their children such as physical and mental harm, social ostracism, long-lasting disorders, and self-deprecation (Matthews & Selebano, 2020). Essential to note that women subjected to abuse were found to refrain from unveiling their experiences and reporting abuse due to cultural barriers, for it is considered taboo to discuss marriage and family matters in public (Matthews & Selebano, 2020). Alongside the previously mentioned significant findings, the study brought to light substantial concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement services in responding to gender-based violence cases (Matthews & Selebano, 2020).

The process of disclosing instances of violence within formal and informal institutions is often characterized by complexity and ambiguity, which may pose significant challenges to the survivors. In this regard, Heron et al. (2021) explored the authentic experiences of individuals who had disclosed domestic violence to the health service in the UK as well as identifying both the barriers and facilitators they encountered during the disclosure process. The researchers used a qualitative approach to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty-nine female participants, eight of whom are from racial minorities, who had reached out to the health services and reported suffering from domestic violence (Heron et al., 2021). The findings revealed that the disclosure of domestic violence to the health service is a highly complex process that is influenced by a couple of factors. The researchers identified a range of barriers that hindered individuals



from disclosing their experiences of domestic violence. These included linguistic problems specific to ethnic minorities, embarrassment, stigma, loss of privacy, fear of reprisal, as well as fear of not being believed (Heron et al., 2021). The study, on the other side, also revealed a number of facilitators that assisted people in sharing their experiences of domestic abuse such as having a dependable healthcare practitioner nearby, being in a secure location, and receiving compassionate treatment from healthcare workers (Heron et al., 2021).

In the same vein, Clavesilla (2014) investigated how survivors of intimate partner violence perceive their experiences with social institutions, specifically healthcare workers and welfare organizations. Furthermore, she explored the enforcement and implementation of laws on racial minority groups in the United States compared to the dominant ethnicity. The sample semi-structured interviews included twenty survivors of IPV who had sought help from social institutions such as healthcare, law enforcement, and social services. According to the study's findings, survivors of intimate partner abuse had mixed feelings about their interactions with social institutions (Clavesilla, 2014). More precisely, although some participants reported favorable experiences, such as feeling supported and validated, others reported unpleasant experiences, such as feeling blamed or criticized (Clavesilla, 2014). The quality of services provided by social institutions was also identified as an important factor that influenced survivors' perceptions of their experiences (Clavesilla, 2014). Participants who received high-quality services were more likely to report positive experiences. Several barriers and challenges were also identified, such as a lack of resources, long waiting times, and poor communication with staff (Clavesilla, 2014). Participants also reported feeling re-traumatized by their interactions with social institutions, which sometimes reinforced feelings of shame and guilt (Clavesilla, 2014). Clavesilla (2014) concluded that social institutions play a significant role in supporting

survivors of IPV. Nevertheless, she recommended that social institutions prioritize the needs of survivors and provide trauma-informed care that is sensitive to the unique needs of survivors of IPV (Clavesilla, 2014).

The outbreak of COVID-19 coupled with the subsequent lockdown measures were found to have a significant impact on the prevalence of violence against women, with a couple of studies reporting an increase in incidents of abuse and violence within the home during this period. Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro and Endurance Uzobo (2023) conducted salient research aimed to examine the implications of the pandemic curfew on domestic violence cases in Africa (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023). The findings of the study showed the significant rise in domestic violence incidents during the Covid19 pandemic lockdowns in Africa namely in the selected nation: Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023). The study also found that the lockdowns had a great impact on women, who were vulnerable to suffer from domestic violence (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023). Moreover, the researchers identified several factors that contributed to the rise in domestic violence cases amidst the lockdowns, including but not limited to economic stress following the massive loss of jobs, social isolation, and restricted access to support services (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023). Furthermore, the findings revealed that the pandemic had significant ramifications on the mental health of DV survivors (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023). As for the response to domestic violence incidents, the government's handling of the cases during the COVID-19 lockdown was found to be largely inadequate and ineffective. On the contrary, nongovernmental organizations were able to respond more flexibly and efficiently to domestic violence during the pandemic (Endurance Uzobo, Aboluwaji D Ayinmoro, 2023).

Legal systems are often rooted in a patriarchal culture and religious practices, resulting in gender bias and systemic inequalities for women and marginalized communities, and leaving women with little legal protection from domestic violence. Nurtjahyo (2022) carried out comparative research on the handling of domestic violence cases by analyzing the legal rules in Thailand, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Indonesia and Singapore. More specifically, the study scrutinized the policies handling the issue of violence against women in each country as well as delved into examining the practice and enforcement of such policies given the different cultural contexts among the five states. According to Nurtjahyo (2022) in Timor Leste, the Penal Code criminalizes violence against women and children, but not marital rape. Consequently, lawmakers tend to face fierce objections from both religious groups and customary leaders in issues related to violence against women on the claim that it is a family matter and not a state affair (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Nevertheless, for the sake of containing the rise of incidents of violence committed against women, the state's agencies do coordinate with local NGOs to provide assistance to women subjected to domestic violence (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Safe houses are the first destination for the victims to receive psychological support and social protection from their perpetrators. Later, they will either be transferred to permanent shelters or reunited with their family. However, in several instances, the process of assisting the victims is hindered due to the fact that the police do not arrest the abusers immediately (Nurtjahyo, 2022). In the same vein, Nurtjahyo (2022) argues that the Malaysian Penal Code stipulates that rape is a criminal act for which the perpetrator may face a sentence of twenty years in prison with the exemption of marriage. Essentially, while marital rape is not explicitly criminalized, the recent introduction of Section 375A of the legal code has made it illegal for a husband to use threats of harm or violence against his wife in order to coerce her into engaging in sexual acts. In addition to security

forces in charge of enforcing laws, Malaysia has founded a commission for preserving human rights in specific, referred to as the Malaysian Human Rights Commission dedicated to safeguarding human rights in the country, particularly those of children and women (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Notwithstanding, having regulations on domestic violence, which are enforced at the state level, Nurtjahyo (2022) contends that Malaysia still experiences legal pluralism in the arena of violence against women on the grounds that it legally recognizes the accusation of the disobedience of the male spouse (Nurtjahyo, 2022).

Regarding the lacunas in the legal frameworks and practices addressing gender-based violence, Nurtjahyo (2022) contends that regulations aimed at addressing violence against women remain gender-biased whereby domestic violence, excluding sexual assault, is regarded to occur only within marital relationships, and rape is perceived to take place outside of the wedlock (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Moreover, the definition of rape provided by such regulations is often narrowly construed (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Furthermore, Nurtjahyo argues that the legal culture poses several challenges to addressing violence against women in that religious and traditional leaders tend to have opposing standpoints on violence targeting women and children than those of the state, i.e., they generally consider VAW an issue among families matters (Nurtjahyo, 2022). Additionally, some legal officers lack a victim-centered perspective and thus, cases of violence against women are not always given the necessary priority in legal processing (Nurtjahyo, 2022). As for protecting the victims, legal illiteracy remains a significant issue. During the outrage of the pandemic, court culture has been slow to adapt to online mechanisms, especially economic challenges also arise, particularly regarding funding for the handling of cases, victim assistance, and recovery (Nurtjahyo, 2022).

## **2.2 Previous Studies in the Mena Region**

Given that this current study aims to investigate the intersectional experience of women with domestic violence in Algeria, a country located in the MENA region, it is crucial to explore the relevant literature from the broader region. Accordingly, this section of the literature review provides an overview of current research on domestic violence in the MENA region. This exploration of the literature is important for the current study's contextualization, as it will shed light on the unique aspects of domestic violence in this region, which will help inform the analysis of domestic violence in Algeria.

It was reported in the literature that the interplay of culture, social norms, and religion impacts perceptions of domestic violence. Obeid et al. (2010) surveyed two hundred-six Lebanese college students to examine the attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence among university students at the Lebanese American University. Moreover, they investigated how cultural norms and religious beliefs influence attitudes toward domestic violence, and whether attitudes towards wife-beating vary based on gender, education level, and religiosity (Obeid et al., 2010). They found out that the large majority of informants believed that not under any circumstances, wife-beating shall be acceptable (Obeid et al., 2010). Additionally, findings showed that attitudes towards wife-beating were influenced by the traditional understanding of women's roles (Obeid et al., 2010). Notwithstanding, it was revealed that the attitudes toward wife beating and violence against women have nothing to do with religious beliefs, but rather with the prevailing Middle Eastern Arabic culture itself characterized by male dominance and patriarchy (Obeid et al., 2010).

Some research has investigated the encounters of women victims of domestic violence with social institutions as well as the support services provided to them. In their

influential Ethnographic–Feminist Study, Safadi et al. (2013) examined the experiences of Jordanian women survivors of domestic violence who were receiving aid from the Jordanian Women’s Union. The findings indicated that domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Jordan, affecting a significant portion of women in the Hashemite Kingdom (Safadi et al., 2013). Moreover, the researchers identified several forms of violence that women were subjected to including but not limited to forced marriage, and psychological, physical, and economic abuse (Safadi et al., 2013). Additionally, it was found that cultural and societal norms, a lack of legal protection, and fear of retaliation are the main barriers faced by women in seeking help and accessing justice (Safadi et al., 2013). Finally, the investigators argued that there is a need for comprehensive and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing domestic violence in Jordan, including the provision of support services, legal protection, and public education on the issue (Safadi et al., 2013).

In the same vein, Al-Kuwari (2020) explored the phenomenon of gender-based violence in Qatar, with a focus on assessing the efficacy of various government-backed initiatives, namely the Social and Rehabilitation Center for Women and Children referred to as AMAN as well as evaluating the legal protections afforded to victims of male’s abuse in the gas-rich nation (Al-Kuwari, 2020). Through conducting interviews with experts in the field including lawyers and human rights advocates in addition to the data retrieved from the researcher’s own observation during her internship at AMAN, the findings disclosed that GBV is a multifaceted problem in Qatar, affecting Qatari women, and occurring in various forms, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence (Al-Kuwari, 2020). Furthermore, several factors that contribute to the persistence of violence in Qatar, including cultural norms and gender roles, socialization processes, economic dependency, and lack of awareness and access to services were identified (Al-Kuwari, 2020). Moreover,

the research investigator discussed the deficiency in the strategy implemented by AMAN to combat gender-based violence and proposed that AMAN ought to prioritize the provision of assistance to victims of violence and should expand its scope and understanding of violence targeting women in Qatar. (Al-Kuwari, 2020).

Other studies have explored the features of violence against women and the profiles of victims who present in forensic departments. Haddad Nihel et al. (2017) carried out a study to investigate the characteristics as well as the prevalence of violence against women in Kairouan, a city in central Tunisia. Based on a survey of 100 women aged 18 years and above who lived in Kairouan, it was found that violence against women was prevalent in Kairouan, with more than half of the women surveyed reported experiencing at least one form of violence in their lifetime (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017). Additionally, the most common form of violence reported was intimate partner violence, followed by physical violence and economic violence (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017). Furthermore, the findings revealed that the background of women who had experienced violence was mainly of low levels of education, social class, and income (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017). Besides, the study found that women subjected to violence were more likely to face social and economic barriers, such as poverty, social isolation, and limited access to healthcare (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017). In addition, several risk factors for violence against women in Kairouan, including alcohol addiction, extramarital affairs, and issues with extended family members were identified (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017). Moreover, the study demonstrated that cultural and societal norms which perpetuate gender inequality and patriarchy were contributing factors to violence against women in Kairouan (Haddad Nihel et al., 2017).

Similarly, Boughima et al. (2018) looked into the profiles of domestic violence victims in Morocco for the sake of providing a detailed description of the characteristics and

experiences of women who have endured violence firsthand in the city of Casablanca. Surveying 254 victims who sought help from and attended the forensic department of Casablanca's university hospital, it was found that domestic violence was a widespread problem in the region, with almost 62% of the women surveyed reporting that they have suffered some form of violence from their intimate partner (Boughima et al., 2018). Furthermore, the most common forms of violence reported were physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological violence (Boughima et al., 2018). The research also identified factors for domestic violence, including low education levels, economic dependence on the partner, and early marriage (Boughima et al., 2018). Moreover, women who endured violence were found to have the tendency to suffer from both mental and physical health problems such as depression, severe anxiety and physical injuries (Boughima et al., 2018). Additionally, it was revealed that many women who experienced domestic violence faced significant barriers when seeking help, including lack of awareness of available services, social stigma as well as fear of retaliation from their partners (Boughima et al., 2018). Therefore, many women did not seek help until they had experienced multiple episodes of violence (Boughima et al., 2018).

### **2.3 Previous Studies in Algeria**

Undertaking a thorough review of the extant literature on domestic violence in Algeria is of paramount importance to identify and address gaps and limitations in previous research. Hence, this section of the literature review offers a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on domestic violence in Algeria. It is important to note that this review will provide insights into the existing gaps in the literature, which can be addressed by this research, and will facilitate a more nuanced and informed analysis of the topic of this thesis.



Previous scholarly investigations in Algeria have explored the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and the various factors that contribute to its occurrence. In their salient field study, Bouziane & Nasser (2017) looked at the notion of intimate partner violence and the factors contributing to its occurrence. Through conducting structured interviews with ten women who were subjected to their intimate partner violence who attended the Forensic Medicine Department, Frantz Fanon Hospital, it was revealed that the educational and cultural disparities between the spouses as well as the absence of effective communication between them are the primary causes for the occurrence of intimate partner violence (Bouziane & Nasser, 2017). Furthermore, the impoverished economic status of the family does exacerbate the living conditions and thus, usually causes violence toward women to take place (Bouziane & Nasser, 2017). In the same vein, Bouzideh (2009) explored the social context wherein violence against women takes place the most. The findings retrieved from the survey distributed to a total number of 36 women who were physically assaulted by their male spouses and were examined by forensic doctors at Mustafa Pasha Hospital, disclosed that husbands tend to use violence against their spouses as an attempt to assert power and reaffirm their status as the head of the household who must be obeyed (Bouzideh, 2009). Furthermore, the informants reported that they attribute such behavior to the patriarchal norms that dominate society and reinforce male superiority (Bouzideh, 2009).

During the pandemic, there was a notable increase in the incidence of domestic violence, as indicated by the available data. In this respect, Dekhir (2021) examined the impact of Covid19 as a motivator of domestic violence in Algeria. She found out that the confinement exacerbated intimate partner violence as husbands, who used to work eight hours a day, stayed at home due to lockdown measures by the state Dekhir (2021). Moreover, the findings revealed that men- with low income and poor educational

backgrounds have the tendency to assault their wives to claim their masculine power Dekhir (2021). Furthermore, women stated that they had to endure violence and were unable to escape their husbands' oppression because of the pandemic that set barriers to mobility Dekhir (2021). Additionally, the victims reported having negative experiences with healthcare providers and indicated that they did not receive any support from the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family Affairs, and the Status of Women (Dekhir, 2021).

Other research investigated the influence of domestic violence on the well-being of the victims. Mellouki et al. (2023) scrutinized the impact of domestic violence in the Northeastern Region of Algeria, namely in the state of Annaba, by examining the sociodemographic characteristics of the victims of gender-based violence, the types and severity of violence, and the outcomes of the violence. Based on the data collected from victims of violence who presented at the Forensic Medicine and Toxicology Department over a period of 3 months, the study revealed that domestic violence is a prevalent issue in the Northeastern Region of Algeria, with men being the primary perpetrators and women being the major victims (Mellouki et al., 2023). Additionally, the findings indicated that the majority of victims suffered emotional and physical violence, with a smaller proportion suffering sexual violence (Mellouki et al., 2023). Furthermore, it was revealed that domestic violence had significant physical consequences such as permanent disabilities and psychological ramifications that includes post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression (Mellouki et al., 2023).

With respect to the concept of the interplay between gender imbalances and violence against women, Babou (2019) explored the relationship between the violent behavior of gender-based violence and gender identities in the Algerian social context. According to Babou (2019), violence against women as a practice is related to how masculinities and femininities are negotiated within Algerian communities (Babou, 2019).

Furthermore, through conducting critical discourse analysis to interview excerpts with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds encompassing both men and women, it was disclosed that gender imbalances and hegemonic masculinity are reproduced and transmitted by means of language, and thus the miscommunication between the two genders form driving factor that led men to react violently (Babou, 2019). Moreover, the men interviewed reported exercising their sense of masculinity through the use of violence against their wives as a means of asserting their power and control (Babou, 2019).

While research has shed light on the prevalence of gender-based violence, no studies thus far have examined the distinct experiences of Algerian women who have suffered from domestic violence through an intersectional lens. Therefore, this study aims to expand the current literature by investigating how Algerian women's intersectional identities shape their encounters with domestic violence.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Description of Data Collection**

The present study employed a qualitative method to collect data which involves conducting in person semi structured interviews with survivors of domestic violence in Algeria. A qualitative research method was utilized due to the fact that it allows for a more profound understanding of the subjective encounters and perspectives of participants involved, which is appropriate when exploring complex, sensitive, and nuanced topics like the experiences of women subjected to domestic violence. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are ideal for this study since they offer the investigator the flexibility in questioning whilst guaranteeing that all participants are asked the same fundamental questions. Besides, this tool of data collection allowed a more in-depth examination of the participants' personal experiences by offering them the opportunity to express themselves in their unique words. Furthermore, this method permitted the researcher to collect detailed, extensive, and comprehensive data that was later examined through qualitative data analysis techniques to identify reoccurring themes in the informants' experiences.

#### **3.2 Description of the Sample**

The population selected for this study included ten Algerian women with firsthand experience of domestic abuse. The participants were all above the age of 18, with ages ranging from early twenties to mid-fifties. For the sake of ensuring a diverse

representation of the region, the individuals who participated were chosen from various urban and rural areas in Djelfa province situated 300 kilometers south of Algiers.

Participants' educational levels also were varied. Whilst some have accomplished higher education, others, however, achieved only elementary education. In addition, the participants were from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. While some are hailing from rich households, others are trying to make ends meet. Moreover, certain research participants hold professional occupations, but others worked in low-wage positions or were unemployed. The participants' marital status differed as well wherein four of them are divorced, three others are married and the remaining three are single. It is important to note that domestic violence, including physical, mental, and psychological abuse, has been experienced by all of the women examined.

The objective for such a broad and diverse sample collection was to shed light on the distinctive accounts of the participants from different backgrounds as well as providing a deep understanding of the phenomenon of domestic violence in Algeria. By examining the experiences of women of different ages, educational levels, socio-economic backgrounds, and marital statuses, the study aimed to develop a nuanced understanding of domestic violence and highlight the complex factors that contribute to it. The findings of this study are beneficial to develop interventions and policies that can help prevent domestic violence and support survivors in Algeria.

### **3.3 The Recruitment of the Sample**

The participants in this study were recruited using a combination of both the researcher's personal network in the province of Djelfa as well as snowball sampling. This method was especially beneficial for collecting difficult-to-reach populations since it

permitted me to navigate in the existing social networks and reach individuals who might be unwilling to engage in research through traditional recruiting approaches.

### **3.4 Interview: Procedure, Duration and Setting**

The current study entailed in-depth semi-structured interviews that were conducted in a private setting, guaranteeing confidentiality and privacy for participants. Before the interview, each participant was given around 6 minutes to read and sign the informed consent form, which explicitly states the voluntary nature of participation, the aim of the study and the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The interviews ranged from 45 to 55 minutes, allowing sufficient time for participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives on domestic violence. Due to the high sensitivity of the topic of this research, i.e. domestic violence coupled with the probability that the interviewees may face significant emotional challenges to talk about their experiences virtually, the interviews were carried out in person rather than online to maintain a comfortable and free environment for the participants. It is important to highlight that the personal nature of the interviews offered the participants a space to discuss openly with no fear of privacy issues and retribution.

Furthermore, the research took place in a province in the center of Algeria known as Djelfa. The decision to conduct the present study in Djelfa in particular was informed by three main elements: the researcher's familiarity with the region, strong academic interest to study the phenomenon in this province in addition to social relevance. The fact that I have a personal familiarity with Djelfa whereby I hold a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted socioeconomic dynamics underpinning gender inequality offered a valuable foundation for this research. Moreover, the scarcity of research on the notion of domestic violence in Djelfa, particularly in rural and semi-urban

areas, presents a significant gap in knowledge that this study seeks to address by generating empirical data and contributing to the broader literature on gender-based violence in Algeria. Lastly, the absence of NGOs in Djelfa to address domestic violence further underscores the importance of this study. The findings are expected to provide insights into the nature, factors, and ramifications of domestic violence in Djelfa, and generate implications for policy and practice to address this critical social problem.

### **3.5 Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality**

Research shows that the experience of domestic violence is not homogenous, but rather varies based on a range of intersecting social identities, including but not limited to gender, class, race, disability, gender, and sexuality (Kasturirangan, 2008; McGarry et al., 2017). Hence, the present study employs the feminist theory of intersectionality, first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, as the overarching methodology to investigate the experiences of Algerian women who were victims of domestic violence. Such a choice of theoretical framework was founded on its ability to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how multiple forms of oppression and privilege intersect and interact, thereby shaping individuals' experiences. According to MacKinnon, “Intersectionality is animated by a method in the sense of an operative approach to law, society, and their symbiotic relation, by a distinctive way into a reality that captures not just the static outcomes of the problem it brings into view but its dynamics and lines of force as well. It is this that makes it transformative” (MacKinnon, 2013). By using intersectionality as a theoretical framework, the investigator was able to move beyond a one-dimensional understanding of domestic violence and consider the multiple ways in which social identities intersect and interact to shape experiences of violence and victimization. Furthermore, this

approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the sophisticated interplay between various social identities as well as the influence of these intersections on the experiences of domestic violence among Algerian women.

In this regard, Cho asserts, “What makes an analysis intersectional—whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline—is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power.” (Cho et al., 2013). This, in turn, can inform more nuanced and effective interventions and policies to address domestic violence and support survivors. By adopting an intersectional lens, this study aims to examine how the intersection of multiple social categories, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms shapes the individual experiences of Algerian women who are victims of domestic violence at the micro level. Furthermore, the current research aimed to identify how such overlapping societal structures of oppression and privilege manifest at the macro level of society.

### **3.6 Data Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was the analysis approach adopted in this study. Such selection of this method to analyze data was informed by the fact that it is a participant-focused approach (Jonathan Alan Smith et al., 2009). That is to say, it enables the investigator to explore the lived experiences of the interviewees. According to Smith & Osborn (2014), IPA has three theoretical underpinnings. First of all, as initially formulated by Husserl, it is founded on the philosophy of phenomenology. More specifically, it aims to generate an authentic account of lived experiences without any interference of theoretical assumptions and preconceptions. Another theoretical foundation of IPA is the acknowledgement of sense-making as an integral component of the human experience. Last but not least, the idiographic nature of IPA whereby it looks at



the specifics of each particular account of the interviewees, enables the researcher to identify the similarities and differences among the diverse experiences of the informants (Smith & Osborn, 2014).

Thus, with its theoretical foundations, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, IPA offers a robust framework to explore and understand the lived experiences of domestic violence survivors. That is to say, it enables the researcher to identify patterns in survivors' narratives, such as their expressions of emotions, descriptions of experiences, and strategies for coping. By doing so, IPA facilitates a deeper understanding of the social and psychological impact of domestic violence on survivors. Furthermore, it allows the investigator to explore the ways in which survivors perceive and make sense of their experiences of violence by investigating the beliefs, values, and cultural factors that shape their' views of violence. Hence, this method is particularly well-suited to the current study, as it permits in-depth investigation of how women who have experienced domestic violence in Algeria make sense of their individual experiences and to comprehend the phenomenon from their standpoint as Tuffour positis, 'IPA is particularly attractive because of its commitment to explore, describe, interpret, and situate the participants' sense making of their experiences' (Tuffour, 2017). Moreover, such an approach is consistent with the tenets of intersectionality theory, which emphasizes the importance of centering the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in research. It aligns with the aims of the study, which is to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the experiences of Algerian women with domestic violence.

### **3.7 Description of the Interview Guide**

In this research, which involves semi-structured interviews with a sample of 10 women who have experienced domestic violence in Djelfa province, in Algeria, an

interview guide was used to ensure consistency in the questions asked and to guide the conversation. The interview guide comprises two sections of questions. The first section, composed of five questions and a follow-up one, is dedicated to obtaining demographic information from the participant, which is crucial for conducting intersectional analysis. The second section, consisting of questions, focuses on asking questions directly related to the topic under investigation: the international experiences of women with domestic violence in Algeria.

In the first section, the opening question, "Can you tell me about yourself?" aimed to allow the interviewee to take the lead in the conversation, share their personal background and context, and provide valuable insights into the complex nature of domestic violence. By using an open-ended question like this right at the beginning of the interview, I, as a researcher, could establish trust and build rapport with the interviewee, creating a more comfortable and safer environment for them to share their experiences and perspectives.

The following question was "What is the highest educational qualification you hold?" This question aimed to learn about the educational background of the interviewees for two reasons. Being aware of the interviewee's level of education permitted the researcher to adjust her questions and terminology to be in line with each participant's background knowledge, and thus ensuring mutual understanding. Moreover, the investigator could have insight into the socioeconomic profile of the interviewee that is very relevant to the chief aim of this study. For the sake of having a comprehensive understanding of the survivor's background including their family socioeconomic status, a follow-up question "What is the educational background of your parents?" was interrogated to the women involved in the study.

“What is your marital status?” was the third question. The aim of such a question was to obtain demographic information that is relevant to comprehend the perspectives and experiences of the interviewees as well as their social contexts. It is important to note that the investigator was able to comprehend the different social contexts of each participant when having a clear understanding of their marital status.

Moreover, aiming to learn about the economic status of the interviewees, their financial autonomy or independence in particular, the fourth question "What is your current occupational status?" was asked. The informants' answers to this question were crucial to identify potential financial hurdles to seeking help.

“With which social class do you identify with?” was the last question in the first section. The rationale for asking the participants about their social class was to gain insight into how multiple interlocking elements such as diverse socioeconomic status intersect with the survivor's account of abuse. Moreover, the researcher was able to elucidate the manner in which control and power operate within abusive relationships when learning about the social group the victim identifies with. Such a question helped to reveal the complex intersections of power, privilege, and inequality that underlie abuse.

In the second section of the interview guide, the initial question asked to the participant was "How do you define violence against women?" By asking the interviewee to define violence, the investigator could obtain a deeper understanding of how the participant perceives and interprets her experience of domestic violence. The interviewee's responses revealed important information about their beliefs, values, and cultural background. More specifically this question aimed to learn whether the informants have a narrower definition of violence, only considering physical abuse to be violent or considering emotional and psychological abuse as well. Moreover, understanding the interviewee's perception of violence is important for interpreting their experiences within

the larger societal context, i.e., the societal norms and beliefs about gender roles and relationships which may influence their understanding of what is considered acceptable behavior within both their families of birth and marriage.

The second question “Can you tell me about your access to financial resources and whether you are able to make financial decisions independently?” was asked for the sake of gaining insight into the participants’ economic situation, decision-making as well as to learn whether the informants have experienced economic violence. Learning about the extent to which the survivors of abuse have control over their financial resources is crucial to have insight into the ways economic abuse is adopted as a form of control.

The purpose of asking "How would you describe your sense of personal freedom in your daily life?" and the follow up question “Have you ever felt physically restrained to go somewhere or leave a location?" was to gain insight into the survivors’ ability to practice their agencies in making decisions and mobility. It is important to understand the participant's level of personal freedom and any limitations they face in order to better understand the complex nature of domestic violence and its impact on the lives of survivors.

Aiming to have a clearer picture of the participant's family dynamics and personal relationships with the male figures in their household, the fourth question “Can you tell me a bit about your family (father, brother) /partner and your relationship with them?” Was asked. The response to this question allowed the provision of insight into the participant's support network and potential sources of stress or conflict. Additionally, understanding the participant's relationship with their family/partner can shed light on power dynamics and the potential for abuse or control within these relationships. For the sake of learning about how the male figures in the interviewee's life, such as a father, brother, or partner, impacted the participant’s daily life, the follow-up question "How does your relationship

with your family/partner affect your daily life and are there any issues or conflicts in your relationship with your family/partner?" was asked. In fact, it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the interviewee's personal life and the dynamics of their relationships. By understanding the interviewee's experiences, the researcher could determine whether the violence is a result of a larger social issue or stems from specific relationships.

Additionally, this question allowed the investigator to gain information about the severity and frequency of the abuse experience from the interviewee, as well as any potential triggers or factors that contribute to the violence.

For the sake of gaining insight into the participant's account with sexual coercion as well as control over their intimate relationships, the question "Have you ever felt pressured or coerced into having sex with your partner that you did not want to engage in, and do you feel that you have control over your decisions regarding birth control, and pregnancy?" was asked. Needless to say, that such a question was designed to comprehend any potential forms of coercion or abuse in the sexual history of the survivors that occurred in their intimate relationships.

The core question of the interview guide "Now, can you talk about your experience of domestic violence?" was designed to gain a thorough understanding of the survivors' personal accounts of domestic violence. By asking this question, the investigator could elicit specific and detailed information about the interviewee's experience with domestic violence including but not limited to the forms of abuse they have endured, the duration and frequency of the abuse as well as the impact of it on their lives.

The seventh question "How do you respond and react to the violence committed against you?" was asked to learn about the victim's responses to domestic violence. By asking such a question, the researcher could gain insights into the practical strategies for survival and the coping mechanisms implemented by the survivors in response to abuse.

Aiming to encourage the participant to share their accounts with anxiety, fear and their strategies to cope with these feelings, the question “Have you ever felt like you needed to alter your behavior or actions to avoid physical harm or violence?” was asked. By asking this question, the investigator could gain insight into the survivor’s sense of autonomy and agency while subjected to violence.

The ninth question "Have you ever sought legal action? Why & how?" was designed to learn about the survivors' experiences with the judicial system. More specifically, it permitted the investigator to learn whether the survivors took legal action against their perpetrators as well as exploring their experiences with both the legal and social resources. Furthermore, such a question allowed the researcher to explore the effectiveness of legal interventions as well as gaining insight into the hurdles the survivors encounter to pursue legal recourse.

Finally, “Do you blame society or the legal system for the experience of violence you were subjected to?” was the concluding question that aimed at exploring the interviewee's perception of the societal and legal structures that shape their experiences of violence. The question sought to understand whether the interviewee attributes blame to society or the legal system for their experiences of violence. It was designed to elicit information about the interviewee's attitudes toward the legal and social systems and to determine whether there are any perceived gaps or inadequacies in these systems that might need to be addressed.

It should be noted that these only asked for prompt answers. Some questions may not be asked as the purpose of the interviews is to learn about the individualistic experiences of women victims of domestic violence.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the present study, ethical considerations were taken into consideration whilst conducting the interviews. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring they were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their involvement, and any potential risks or benefits associated with their participation. Participants' confidentiality and privacy were protected by collecting only non-identifying information and conducting interviews in a private location. Pseudonyms chosen by the research participants were used to refer to them in written or published materials. The researcher was also aware of potential power dynamics between her and the participants and took steps to create a safe and non-judgmental space for the interviewees to share their accounts and perspectives. Finally, the study was conducted in an ethical and respectful manner towards all participants, regardless of their background or identity, and efforts were made to ensure diverse representation in the study.

### **3.9 Challenges of the Research**

My research into domestic violence in Algeria was not without its challenges. One of the most significant hurdles I encountered was obtaining IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval for my study. Because I intended to interview research participants in Algeria, the IRB at LAU, did not have the jurisdiction to approve studies taking place outside of Lebanon's geographic boundaries. As a result, I had to explore alternative pathways to gain approval for my research. I reached out to various ministries and universities to secure the necessary permissions but to no avail. Eventually, after an extended effort, I was able to obtain approval from Wassila NGO, a local organization dedicated to combating domestic violence in Algeria. Moreover, conducting research in Algeria presented logistical challenges that demanded my presence in the country. Due to

the high sensitivity of the topic of the study I had to travel to Algeria to conduct interviews with research participants in person. Despite these challenges, I remained committed to carrying out the research and shed light on the impact of domestic violence in Algeria.



# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

This chapter delves into analyzing the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The significant themes and patterns that emerged from the accounts of the survivors are examined in relation to this main objective and research question. Through carrying out interpretative phenomenological analysis, the present study aims to obtain a deep comprehension of the perspectives, the accounts as well as the attitudes of the survivors of domestic violence.

### **4.1 Kinds of Domestic Violence Experienced by the Survivors**

#### **4.1.1 Physical Abuse**

The results retrieved from the interviews disclosed that physical violence was a ubiquitous experience. All of the ten interviewees reported experiencing a form of physical violence that involved a range of behaviors, including but not limited to slapping, hitting and even using sharp objects such as knives. Interestingly, this finding is consistent with previous research, which has found that physical abuse is one of the most prevalent forms of domestic violence (Smith et al., 2002; Desmarais et al., 2012; Bazargan-Hejazi et al., 2013; Safadi et al., 2013).

One survivor of IPV, Houria, reported being subjected to frequent physical abuse at the hands of her former husband. She said,

I was subjected to severe and frequent violence by my former husband. He would often hit me, leaving visible bruises and marks on my body. I remember one instance where he came home late at night and, because he was displeased with the dinner I had cooked for our children, he beat me.

Houria's experience highlights the seriousness of physical abuse and its potential to escalate quickly over minor issues. Similarly, Samia, a 31-year-old single university graduate, described being subjected to frequent physical assault by her elder brother. One particularly brutal incident involved her brother throwing a hot cup of coffee at her for serving it too hot, resulting in lasting burns on her neck and shoulder. Shockingly, this incident took place in the presence of parents, yet no intervention was made to protect Samia. She stated: "I was constantly living in fear, never knowing when the next attack would come. Even now, years later, though my brother no longer lives in the family house, I still struggle with the trauma." Such a statement denotes the ongoing impact of physical violence on Samia, even after she has left the situation.

#### **4.1.2 Emotional Abuse**

Similarly to physical violence, the results revealed that emotional violence was also prevalent among the participants, with all of them (n=10) reported experiencing some form of psychological abuse. Among those who were abused by their intimate partner, Zakia, a 29-year-old married mother of five, reported experiencing psychological violence on a daily basis from her husband, who made derogatory comments about her body following childbirth. She stated, "My husband always made comments about my weight and how my body deformed after having children. It made me feel like I was worthless and unattractive." In the same vein, Nassima, a divorced mother of two and a French teacher, disclosed that during her ten-year marriage, she suffered from name-calling and verbal abuse from her

husband. In her words, “He would constantly belittle me, call me names, and insult me, making me feel worthless and unlovable.” According to a study conducted by Clark et al (2009) in Jordan, intimate partner violence was found to be highly prevalent among women, with 97.2% of participants reporting control and 73.4% reporting psychological violence. Qualitative data from the study also revealed that some participants reported experiencing blaming and insulting behaviors from their partners, which contributed to feelings of low self-worth and distress (Clark et al., 2009).

Among others who experienced psychological violence from a non-intimate partner violence, Yakout, a 33-year-old single project manager at an NGO, shared that she is going through a tough experience of psychological violence from her brother. She states,

I have experienced psychological violence from my brother who constantly surveils and controls me. One time, when I arrived home ten minutes late, he insulted me and threatened me with consequences, including making me stop working. It is emotionally distressing to be subjected to such behavior, particularly when it comes from a family member.

In their study exploring sibling-to-sibling violence, Martinez and McDonald (2016) found that heterosexual women reported experiencing frequent psychological and verbal violence from their brothers (Martinez & McDonald, 2016).

#### **4.1.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual violence was another type of domestic violence experienced by the survivors in this study. Out of the 10 participants, six (n=6) reported experiencing sexual abuse. The forms of sexual abuse reported by the survivors included unwanted sexual contact, coerced sex, marital rape, and unwanted pregnancies. The survivors who

experienced sexual abuse reported feeling violated, ashamed, and traumatized by the abuse. For instance, Nassima, a 37-year-old French teacher and divorced mother of two, shared her experience of being forced to have sex by her former husband despite being exhausted after a long day at work. According to Nassima, her husband would become angry and verbally abusive if she refused his advances, leaving her feeling trapped and helpless. She adds:

For ten years, I felt like a victim of marital rape. My husband forced himself on me even when I was tired or sick, and I felt like I had no control over my own body. It was a constant source of shame and humiliation for me, and it took me a long time to come to terms with what had happened to me.

Nassima's account sheds light on the pervasive issue of marital rape in Algeria, where the concept is not legally recognized. In Algerian society, sex within marriage is viewed as a husband's right, and women are expected to fulfill their marital duties regardless of their own desires or physical and emotional state. Nassima's experience of being forced to engage in sexual activity even when she was exhausted from work highlights the harmful consequences of this societal expectation, particularly for women who are unable to assert their own agency within the confines of marriage. The study conducted by Deosthali et al. (2022) that investigated the experience of women with marital rape in India whereby the research informants asserted that they had to endure sexual violence, for marriage construct a social and legal permission to marital rape, provides additional evidence to support this finding (Deosthali et al., 2022).

Reproductive coercion is another form of sexual abuse reported by the research participants, highlighting the pervasive control intimate partners have over their partner's reproductive health. Zakia, a married mother of five girls, reported being forced to have multiple pregnancies in order to fulfill her husband's desire for a son. She stated,

I am only 29 and I was forced to have another sixth pregnancy because my husband wants a boy. I am now pregnant again and uncertain if I will have a boy or a girl. If I do not have a boy, I will have to become pregnant again, but my body is already tired.

This can be explained through the fact that patriarchy grants men the power to dominate and control women's sexuality and reproductive decisions (Hierro & Marquez, 1994). Moreover, such types of reproductive coercion can have serious physical and psychological effects on survivors, particularly if they are forced to carry unwanted pregnancies to term. As in the case of marital rape, Algerian law, unfortunately, does not recognize reproductive coercion as a form of domestic violence.

#### **4.1.4 Financial Abuse**

Financial abuse was another form of violence reported by the survivors, with 7 out of 10 participants (n=7) stating that they experienced some form of economic control or manipulation. One participant, Yamna, a 33-year-old single woman and a professor of marketing at the university, reported experiencing financial abuse, whereby her father controls all her income and she has no autonomy over her finances. She further noted that her brother, on the other hand, does not contribute to the household expenses. This example illustrates the intersection of cultural and gender norms that perpetuate financial abuse against unmarried daughters in Algerian families. It reflects a societal belief that women who are not married have no goals in life and should support their families of birth, while men are expected to save and start their own lives. Such socially constructed beliefs, de facto, contribute to the financial exploitation and control of unmarried daughters, who are seen as a source of income for their families of birth. It is important to note that similar results were achieved in a study conducted in Turkey (Alkan et al., 2021).

Similarly, Nedjma, a 35-year-old married mother of two and a physician, reported experiencing financial abuse from her unemployed husband. Nedjma revealed that her husband takes all her salary, despite her being the sole breadwinner for the family. She is responsible for paying for all the household expenses, including her children's education, medical bills, and household bills. Nedjma added that her husband constantly reminds her that he is allowing her to go to work every day and therefore, she must give him her salary. Such types of financial abuse highlights the power and control dynamics within intimate partner relationships and its impact on survivors' financial independence and overall well-being. These findings align with research carried out in Nigeria whereby women holding prestigious occupational positions, generally higher than their spouses, experience economic violence perpetrated by their intimate partners in an attempt to claim power and control over their wives (Owoo, 2020).

## **4.2 The perpetrators of Violence**

### **4.2.1 Relationship to the Survivors**

Regarding the relationship of the perpetrators to the survivors, it is worth noting that all the survivors reported that the perpetrator was a male family member, specifically a spouse or a male relative, such as a father or a brother. For instance, Alya, a 31-year-old divorced woman who participated in the study, reported that “It's always the male figure in my life that hits me,” highlighting the persistent nature of family violence even after a divorce. Additionally, Noura, a 23-year-old single university student, reported that she, her sister, and mother are all subject to physical violence from her father. Noura also stated, “We are considered his property,” revealing the patriarchal nature of family violence where women are seen as possessions rather than human beings. These examples underscore the

urgent need for targeted interventions and prevention efforts to address violence against women by male family members, and to promote healthy and equitable relationships within families. Similarly, previous research has identified male family members (Mayell, 2002; Begikhani & Gill, 2016) and intimate partners (Usta et al., 2007; Hester, 2009; Mellouki et al. 2023) as the most common perpetrators of violence against women.

Numerous studies have documented violence whereby the intimate partner is the main perpetrator of domestic violence. In many cultures, the expectation is that a wife should be submissive to her husband and follow his orders, which can result in the abuse of power and control over the wife (Taghizadeh et al., 2019). Similarly, in a study conducted in the Central Region of Ghana, Sikweyiya et al (2020) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the driving factors of IPV in Ghana, whereby 17 men who reported using violence against their wives were interviewed. The findings revealed that most men consider decision-making as a man's natural role, and women should submit to their control. Men tend to physically as well as emotionally harm their female partners when their rules and authority are challenged. Furthermore, many men considered women as sub-human or intellectually inferior, and it was the men's duty to provide direction to them. The men preferred a wife who exhibited obedience towards her husband, and a good woman acquiesced to men to sustain their dominance over women (Sikweyiya et al., 2020). Moreover, the abuse of power by male family members such as fathers or brothers can be rooted in patriarchal beliefs and cultural norms that prioritize male authority in controlling women's lives (Salameh et al., 2018). This unequal power dynamic can lead to the perpetration of violence against female family members as a means of maintaining control and enforcing compliance.

#### 4.2.2 Patterns of Behavior

According to the results from the interviews, the patterns of behavior exhibited by the perpetrators of violence against women vary in terms of frequency, severity, and duration. As reported by the survivors, violence was often repeated and even occurred on a daily basis, with some interviewees reporting experiencing violence more than once a day. For instance, Noura reported that she and her sister were subjected to physical violence by their father from a very early age, with no apparent reason for the beatings. She said, “I remember very well how my older sister and I were beaten by my father whenever he entered home.” Houra’s experience demonstrates the frequency and severity of violence experienced by young girls in addition to the long-term duration of such patterns of abuse. In the same vein, some research carried out in Iran and Turkey, found out that physical violence occurs on a daily basis and even for several times (Adineh et al. 2016; Ergöçmen et al.,2013 ).

The severity of the violence also varied. Whilst some interviewees reported experiencing sexual, physical and emotional violence, others reported less severe forms like financial abuse and a sort of controlling. For instance, one interviewee Yamna who is a professor at the university asserted experiencing persistent economic violence. She stated,

I am a 33 year old unmarried university professor. In spite of this age, I have no control over my wage. It is my father who gives me a paltry allowance. Can you imagine that I get even less than 10% of my salary only because I am single!

Yamna’s words denote the dominant social belief that working daughters are not expected to contribute to their own lives unless they get married.

Similarly, the duration of abuse differed as well. Whilst some interviewees confirmed experiencing abuse for several years others reported going through it for shorter



periods. Maysah, for instance, a married lady and mother of two boys, asserted that she was a victim of violence perpetrated by her brother for a certain period of time. Despite the fact that she could escape such abuse once she got married, the trauma still lingers.

Maysah states,

I recall that my elder brother used to be very aggressive. He used to hit me a lot.

Luckily, I got married and left my family's house for good. But the trauma still haunts me, and I often have nightmares.

In some instances, abuse occurred only once while in others it was a recurrent pattern. Such a pattern of behavior denotes that violence is not a one-off incident but rather a deliberate and ongoing attempt to dominate and control the victim. According to Babou (2019), the survivors of IPV in her research reported experiencing violence since their early years of marriage whereas in Dekhir's research (2021) women confirmed that they were subjected to their husbands' physical abuse only during the pandemic.

### **4.3 The Impact of Violence on the Survivors' Lives**

#### **4.3.1 Physical Health**

The interviewees reported a range of short- and long-term consequences on their physical health resulting from the violence they endured. Eight out of ten women reported being physically assaulted that resulted in injuries such as cuts, bruises, and even broken bones. Nassima, for example, was hit by her former spouse that resulted in many bruises all over her body as well as a broken arm. Similarly, Alya suffered a permanent limp following being hit with a chair by her former husband. In this regard, Beeble et al. (2010) found out that physical injuries resulting from IPV have a long-lasting impact on the survivor's quality of life which often leads to chronic pain, limited mobility, and even

disability. In the same vein, Samia suffered permanent scarring and disfigurement following her brother threw hot coffee at her.

It is worth mentioning that such physical injuries form only one aspect of the precarious ramifications of domestic violence. In fact, victims do experience other serious health issues such as depression, anxiety and stress-related illnesses (Riecher-Rössler, 2017). Furthermore, they can further exacerbate the trauma of the survivor and affect their quality of life (Mellouki et al., 2023).

Moreover, four women confirmed that reported that the violence had a significant impact on their reproductive health. For instance, one interviewee Zakia experienced unwanted pregnancies which led to severe complications. She states, “I was forced to have five consecutive pregnancies. This caused me chronic illnesses including vascular disease and anemia.” This denotes the long-term consequences of physical violence on the survivors’ reproductive health.

#### **4.3.2 Mental Health**

The ramifications of violence on the mental health of domestic violence victims are multifaceted and precarious (Matthews & Selebano, 2020; Almiş et al. 2020; Mellouki et al. 2023). The interviewees reported suffering from a range of mental health disorders, such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and even developing suicidal thoughts. Such serious conditions have a significant impact on their daily lives. For instance, one informant expressed her feelings of constant anxiety even though she was not in immediate danger but due to her trauma with violence. Another woman reported experiencing symptoms of depression. Intriguingly, this finding is consistent with a study conducted in Casablanca in Morocco, which also examined the effects of IPV on women's mental health. It was found

that women who experienced IPV reported suffering from anxiety and depression for a long-term period (Boughima et al., 2018).

Additionally, several participants reported experiencing symptoms of PTSD, such as intrusive thoughts or memories of violence, avoidance of reminders of the violence, and hypervigilance. For example, Houria reported having flashbacks of the violence she endured at the hands of her husband, which caused her to feel extremely distressed and overwhelmed. Similarly, Maysah reported that she avoided certain places including the house of her family of birth as well as all situations that reminded her of the abuse she experienced. In this respect, Mellouki et al. (2023) found that survivors of intimate partner violence who presented at the forensic department in the hospital of Annaba reported having symptoms of PTSD.

Some survivors also reported experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings of hopelessness as a result of the violence they experienced. Alya, who experienced abuse both in her marriage and family of origin, attempted suicide three times. She shared, “I couldn't handle the pain anymore. I felt like there was no escape from this violence.” Similarly, Noura reported that she had thought about taking her own life as a way to escape the ongoing abuse she was experiencing from her father. This result is consistent with the findings in a study conducted in Kashmir by Mir Suheel Rasool (2022) whereby women reported developing suicidal ideation to escape unbearable abuse in their household.

### **4.3.3 Social Integration and Relationships**

The Results indicated that the impact of domestic violence extended beyond the survivors' immediate physical and psychological well-being, affecting their social integration and relationships as well. The participants' accounts revealed significant disruptions to their social relationships and networks following the violence they

experienced. Houria, for instance, reported that her former husband restricted her access to her family of origin and prohibited her from maintaining contact with her female friends, which resulted in her feeling isolated and disconnected from her support system. Such behavior is an example of how emotional violence can isolate a survivor from her support network, which can exacerbate the negative impacts of violence and increase the risk of further abuse (Beeble et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 2017). Moreover, the effects of emotional violence on social integration and relationships can be long-lasting, making it difficult for survivors to rebuild their social support networks even after leaving an abusive relationship (Abrahams, 2010).

Similarly, Noura, who had been subjected to violence by her father since childhood, reported difficulty in initiating romantic relationships, stating, "I hate all men!" This experience of violence left her with a deep-seated hatred for all men, making it difficult for her to initiate romantic relationships. Such an example denotes how survivors of family abuse, namely fathers's violence, may struggle with trust issues, fear of intimacy, and feelings of shame or guilt, all of which make it challenging to initiate and maintain romantic relationships. Interestingly, this finding contradicts those of Haselschwerdt et al. (2021), who found that daughters exposed to domestic violence tend to seek out male partners for emotional protection. In contrast, my results suggest that daughters who witness domestic violence may be more likely to avoid romantic relationships altogether due to fear of experiencing similar abuse or trauma.

Furthermore, violence perpetrated by a male family member has a significant impact on the survivors' sense of self-worth and self-esteem, thereby impeding their ability to form healthy relationships. Survivors have developed feelings of unworthiness, convinced that they do not deserve love and respect. As Samia recounted,

I was subjected to physical violence by my brother in the presence of my family. Not in any incident was I supported by them. I began to doubt whether I was loved or valued. It is exceedingly difficult to live with the feeling that even my own parents do not love and protect me.

While this finding is not entirely consistent with those of Matheson et al. (2015), it does support the idea that the experience of family violence has a negative impact on the self-esteem of women. Matheson et al. found that women who experienced IPV suffered from a loss of self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness, while this study revealed that family violence particularly from fathers and brothers can contribute to a sense of rejection from the family of origin, ultimately affecting the development of self-esteem and identity construction. Together, these findings suggest that family violence in various forms can have detrimental ramifications on women's self-esteem as well as their overall well-being.

#### **4.4 Coping Strategies Used by the Survivors**

Survivors of domestic violence often employ a range of coping strategies to deal with the trauma they have experienced. In this study, three strategies were identified.

##### **4.4.1 Seeking Help**

Seeking help is a common coping strategy employed by domestic violence survivors, and it takes many forms, usually informal and formal (Evans & Feder, 2015; Gregory, 2021). The results revealed that some survivors sought assistance from family or friends, who provided emotional support and a safe place to stay. Nassima, for example, recalls a harrowing account. She said:

It was around 2 am. I was having a quarrel with my husband. He was in a violent rage and even broke my arm. My father was the first person that came to my mind. I called him and he arrived promptly. That was the last time I lived with her former husband.

It is important to highlight that Nassima is from a financially stable and highly educated family. This in fact has influenced her decision to seek their help. In other words, the socioeconomic status of her family has offered her a sense of confidence and security. According to the findings of Fitzgerald and Chi's (2020) study in Occupied Palestine, employed women were found to be more likely to seek informal help from their families unlike their unemployed peers. This was attributed to their high sense of agency as well as their socioeconomic status (Fitzgerald & Chi, 2020). Therefore, it can be inferred that the decision of the victim to seek help is influenced by a couple of intersecting factors including but not limited to her cultural beliefs, personal experience and socioeconomic background.

Notwithstanding, others refrained from seeking the help of their natal family. Alya, for instance, said:

When my husband hit me so hard that I couldn't move my leg, I felt like I was paralyzed. But what was even more painful was the realization that I had no one to turn to for help. I knew that if I reached out to my family, they would blame me for the violence and my brother might even hurt me more. It was a feeling of complete isolation and helplessness.

Alya's decision to refrain from seeking help from her family of origin when faced with violence from her husband was influenced by her intersectional experiences. She held a firm belief that her family would not provide her with the necessary support, but instead blamed

her for the situation. This was partly due to her family's low-income background, as well as their patriarchal beliefs and norms that prioritized the superiority of men. These intersectional factors played a significant role in shaping Alya's decision-making process and seeking alternative sources of support. Interestingly, this finding partially aligns with a study conducted in Mexico whereby IPV survivors reported that they refrained from seeking the help of their natal families who would further victimize them (Frías & Carolina Agoff, 2015).

Another option is seeking assistance from NGOs (Spencer et al., 2014; Tengku Hassan et al., 2015). For instance, Houria, a survivor of intimate partner violence, sought assistance from the national non-governmental organization (NGO) Wassila, which specializes in supporting survivors of violence against women. She learned about the organization from a friend and turned to it for help. The NGO provided her with legal support to initiate divorce proceedings. Houria refrained from seeking help from her family as she has three children and was concerned that her family would not provide for them. She stated, “My family adheres to a cultural belief that once a woman gets married, returning to her family home is not an option.” As a result, women are expected to endure violence within their marriages to avoid social stigma and the shame associated with divorce. It is clear that such a decision was influenced by cultural and societal norms that prioritize family honor over individual safety, which intersected with Houria's responsibilities as a mother. According to Gharaibeh & Oweis (2009), women who experienced IPV in Jordan often felt constrained from leaving abusive partners due to the social stigma associated with divorce and the importance placed on family honor and thus they avoid seeking support from their families.

Furthermore, only one survivor turned to the police for help. In a similar cultural context in Palestine, it was found that only 1% of survivors of IPV sought formal help from the police (Fitzgerald & Chi, 2020). Nassima sought the assistance of the police to file a complaint against her former husband. Despite the visible injuries on her broken arm, the police required a certificate of incapacity for 15 days from a forensic doctor before they could take any action against the abuser. This bureaucratic process delayed any potential action that could have been taken to protect Nassima from her abuser. Unfortunately, the delay proved to be costly, for her spouse was able to escape and evade arrest by the time the police were ready to take action. Such a dramatic experience demonstrates the hurdles survivors of IPV face when reaching out to legal authorities for protection. Similar results were found in a study conducted in Pakistan wherein women reported facing delay in processing their cases by the court (Buzdar et al., 2023)

It is worth mentioning that the decision of Nassima to seek legal action against her perpetrator, namely former spouse, is attributed to the intersectionality of her personal background and family upbringing. She said, “I believe that I am a lucky woman to have such a supportive family, especially my father who is a public notary. Absolutely, he encouraged me to report the incident to the authorities” That is to say, coming from such a well-educated family with a high-income, Nassima had access to resources and support systems that enabled her to seek legal action. Furthermore, her father's profession as a public notary played a pivotal role in her decision-making process. The intersection of her family's socioeconomic status and her father's profession provided her with the necessary support and resources to take legal action, which may not have been available to women from lower-income families with fewer resources and support systems.



#### 4.4.2 Self Help

Self-help strategies were used by survivors of IPV as well to manage the situation on their own. One such strategy was finding support in religious or spiritual practices. For instance, Maysah asserted, “I incessantly prayed to have an escape from my brother's violence. My supplications were answered, and I found a wonderful husband who enabled me to permanently break free from my family's abusive environment. However, the trauma still persists.” This finding is consistent with a study conducted in Indonesia that reported that intimate partner violence survivors tend to rely on prayer as a means of resilience and self-help in the face of IPV (Noviyanti et al., 2019).

Another strategy was reported by two interviewees which involved seeking therapy or counseling. Survivors sought professional help to process their experiences and learn coping mechanisms. According to the participants, counseling provided a safe and confidential space to explore their feelings, develop new skills, and build resilience. For instance, Yamna, a professor of marketing, asserted that she turned to counseling and found it to be very helpful. Through counseling, she learned how to escape her family's economic violence. Her counselor suggested that she take a leave of absence from work for a few days so that she would not have any money to give to her family. This strategy helped her to break free from their dependence on her salary. Similarly, Nedjma, a survivor of economic abuse, turned to a psychiatrist for help. She said, “I have been going to a psychiatrist regularly for a year now. He has helped me come to the decision to revolt against my husband's economic abuse. He taught me how to set boundaries and stand up for myself.”

It is worth noting that not all survivors have the same level of education and access to resources as Yamna and Nedjma. Seeking counseling or therapy is stigmatized in Arab

communities, and survivors may not be able to access such services due to financial as well as cultural barriers (Balice et al., 2019). However, Yamna and Nedjma's intersectional identities as educated women, a professor of marketing at the university and a Doctor of Medicine, with a higher socioeconomic status allowed them to access these resources and benefit from them. This highlights the importance of intersectionality in understanding the experiences of survivors and the different strategies they may use to cope with and overcome domestic violence.

#### **4.4.3 Silence**

Silence is a common response to domestic violence (Mannell et al., 2016; Matthews & Selebano, 2020; Pokharel et al., 2020; Herrero-Arias et al., 2021), as many survivors chose not to disclose their experiences. The reasons for this are multifaceted and complex. One common reason is shame, where IPV survivors felt embarrassed or guilty about being in an abusive relationship, thinking that they somehow caused the abuse or that they should have been able to prevent it. Zakia, a victim of IPV, testified about the shame associated with speaking out about her experiences, stating,

I could neither speak about the psychological violence regarding my reproductive decisions nor the physical violence because of shame. People would judge me and accuse me of being the reason for being subjected to violence. In Algeria, men are always privileged, and we, women, just have to remain silent!

It should be noted that Zakia's testimony illustrates the intersectionality of gender, culture, and societal norms that contribute to survivors of intimate partner violence remaining silent. In her case, cultural and societal norms in Algeria dictate that women should not speak out about their experiences of domestic violence, as doing so would be seen as "ruining their

own house" or bringing shame upon their family. This pressure to conform to cultural expectations prevented survivors from seeking help and support, further perpetuating the cycle of violence. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted in Jordan, KSA, and Uganda wherein women avoid reporting incidents of violence due to the social shame and stigma of harming the family reputation associated with such experiences of abuse. (Al-Badayneh, 2012, Alharbi et al., 2023; Anguzu et al., 2023).

Fear is another significant reason why many survivors of domestic violence remain silent (Al-Badayneh, 2012; Boughima et al., 2018). Survivors may be apprehensive about the consequences of speaking out, including retaliation or further harm from the abuser (McCleary-Sills et al., 2016). In fact, such a sense of fear is not unfounded, for it was found that many perpetrators continue to threaten or even carry out acts of violence against their victims who attempt to leave or seek help (Walker et al., 2020). For instance, Yakout, who is a project manager in a well-known NGO, shared her account about enduring violence perpetrated by her older brother. According to her, "I was afraid. I am certain that he would even have attempted to kill me if I file a complaint against him." Such fear can be amplified in the Algerian culture where seeking help or speaking out against family members is not commonly accepted or can result in severe consequences, such as social ostracism or physical harm. Furthermore, Yakout's decision to remain silent about her brother's abuse was influenced by several intersecting factors, such as her gender, familial relations, and socio-cultural norms. As a woman, Yakout felt disempowered and vulnerable in a patriarchal society where men are privileged, and women's voices are often silenced. Her family ties also played a role. The fact that she lives in the same household as her perpetrator, she felt conflicted about reporting him. That is to say that the set of the prevailing socio-cultural norms pertaining to bringing shame influenced her decision to remain silent. These

intersecting factors created a complex and challenging situation for Yakout, making it difficult to break the cycle of abuse.

Cultural and societal norms influenced the decision of the victims to remain silent as well. In Algerian culture, abuse perpetrated by a family member is often regarded as a private matter that should not be discussed with foreigners. This caused survivors to feel as if they had nowhere to turn, including social and support services. Moreover, societal norms even perpetuate and normalize this kind of violence, leading survivors to believe that it is simply a part of their family dynamics and something that they must endure. All of these intersecting factors made it difficult for Noura, a survivor of family of origin violence, to break the silence and seek the help she needed. Noura shared, “I was left with no other choice but to remain silent, as there was no one who supported me when I considered reporting my father for the physical violence, he inflicted upon me.” Unfortunately, in Algeria, this type of violence is often considered normal and acceptable. In fact, speaking out about such violence is often seen as abnormal, with people often stating that a father has the right to discipline their children. According to Al-Badayneh (2012), violence against women is culturally accepted in Jordanian society. Similarly, it was found that powerful social norms in Tanzania prevent women, who refuse to accept intimate partner violence (IPV) as a "normal" practice, from taking action (McCleary-Sills et al., 2016).

## **4.5 Societal and Cultural Factors that Influenced the Survivors'**

### **Experiences**

#### **4.5.1 Patriarchal Values**

In Algeria, patriarchal values and beliefs are deeply ingrained in society (Babou, 2019) and have had a significant impact on the experiences of the interviewees who have

been subjected to several forms of domestic violence. More specifically, the intersectionality of gender, culture, and socioeconomic status has contributed to the normalization of domestic violence against women. For example, many of the women interviewed described how societal and cultural norms dictate that women are expected to be submissive to their husbands and to endure violence as part of their role as a wife. This expectation is particularly strong for women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who may lack the financial independence or social support to leave an abusive relationship. In this respect, Alya explained her experience,

I was taught from a young age that a woman's duty is to serve her husband and cater to his needs, even if it means enduring physical or emotional abuse. It was ingrained in me that leaving my husband was not an option, as it would bring shame to my family and make me a social outcast. Despite the abuse, I stayed with him for years, unable to leave due to my financial dependence on him and the fear of being ostracized by my community.

While such a result agrees with the finding of Haddad Nihel et al. (2017) whereby Tunisian survivors of IPV from low education level, social class, and income were found to be the most likely to be submissive and remain silent, it is important to note that it contradicts that of Daibes and Safadi (2023), who found that highly educated Jordanian women who are financially independent tend to face marital abuse and become submissive to it, normalizing it as an aspect of their marital relationship.

Moreover, the normalization of domestic violence against women is further perpetuated by the patriarchal values and beliefs that prioritize men's power and control over women. As a result, women are often discouraged from speaking out about their experiences

of violence, as doing so is seen as a threat to traditional gender roles and power dynamics. This creates a culture of silence and secrecy surrounding domestic violence, making it difficult for survivors to seek help or support. As such, the case of Zakia, she stated,

I have often heard people in my community say that it is normal for a husband to hit his wife if she has irritated him in some way, she added, I have also experienced pressure from my community to give birth to a son, regardless of how tired or strained my body may be. People have told me that it is my husband's right to have a son. This societal mindset has made it difficult for me to seek help or speak out about my experiences of abuse.

That is to say, the deeply entrenched patriarchal values in Algerian culture pertaining to men's superiority, have contributed to the normalization of such violence against women regarding their reproductive health and decisions, perpetuating the belief that women are mere vessels for men's desires. This result is partially consistent with the study by Safadi et al. (2013), which reported that survivors of domestic abuse in Jordan often felt compelled to conform to traditional gender roles in marriage, such as being a good wife and becoming pregnant.

Furthermore, the findings of the interviews revealed that such patriarchal values do intersect with gender and marital status to normalize economic violence against women. For example, Yakout, a professor of Marketing at a university, describes how she is expected to give all her salary to her father, while her brother is not required to do so. Despite working hard for a whole month, Yakout receives only a symbolic allowance from her salary, while her parents do not ask her brother to contribute from his salary, citing his need to save for marriage and Yakout's unmarried status as reasons for the unequal treatment. The

intersection of gender and marital status in this case reinforces patriarchal norms that prioritize the financial needs and aspirations of men over those of women, leading to economic violence against women. Despite the injustice of the situation, Yakout is unable to report it due to the fear of breaking social norms and facing social repercussions. This is a clear example of how patriarchal norms and the intersectionality of gender and marital status contribute to the normalization of economic violence against employed women in Algeria. This finding represents a significant contribution to the literature, as to our best knowledge, no prior study has investigated the gender imbalances within the natal family between siblings, nor has any prior research specifically examined the phenomenon of economic violence against employed daughters by their fathers.

#### **4.5.2 Cultural Norms and Social Stigma**

There is a strong cultural belief that domestic violence is a private matter and should be dealt with behind closed doors. This belief is deeply ingrained in society and is reinforced by religious and traditional values. As a result, survivors of domestic violence are hesitant to speak out about their experiences or seek help, fearing that they will be ostracized by their families and communities. For instance, one interviewee Samia explained,

I remained silent about the violence of my brother who physically assaulted me and controlled my mobility because it is considered a private matter within the family. Speaking about it would be seen as a violation of the family's honor and could bring shame to my parents.

Samia's explanation highlights the intersectionality of familial and cultural values that contribute to the normalization and acceptance of family violence against women in Algeria. Similarly, in many studies, IPV survivors reported being hindered from disclosing abuse

publicly, for it is culturally acknowledged as a private matter (Kelly, 2011; Balice et al., 2019; Al Taifi et al., 2021; Malik, 2021; Babegi, 2022).

Furthermore, the fear of social stigma also plays a significant role in shaping survivors' experiences with domestic violence. As Alya, a divorced woman, explained,

I didn't speak up about the abuse because I was afraid of the social stigma that comes with being a divorced woman. People would assume that I must have done something to provoke him, or that I had tarnished his honor. Even after the divorce, I still live with this stigma, and it affects my relationships and my sense of self-worth.

Alya's experience underscores that survivors often face blame and criticism from their communities, who view the issue as a private matter or believe that the survivor is somehow responsible for the abuse. Consequently, the fear of being ostracized from their communities following divorce or labeled as a troublemaker does prevent survivors from speaking out or seeking help, further perpetuating the cycle of violence. These results are in agreement with prior research whereby IPV survivors reported not leaving the marriage because of social stigma and shame associated with IPV and divorce (Tonsing et al., 2017; Tenkorang, 2021; Akhter et al., 2022).

In addition to the fear of social stigma, survivors also face victim-blaming attitudes, where they are blamed for the violence inflicted upon them. This blaming often stems from the belief that women must have done something to provoke their abusers, such as failing to fulfill their duties as a daughter, sister, wife or mother. Houria disclosed being subjected to victim blaming attitudes; she stated,



As a divorced woman with three children, I am constantly blamed for raising my children without their father. People tell me that I should have been more understanding and accepting of my ex-husband's violent behavior, as if it were my fault that he was abusive.

In the same vein, Noura shares, “People always find a way to blame you. I could never bring myself to tell that my father hit me for no reason. I knew that no one would believe me and that I would be blamed for his actions.” In other words, this blaming further discouraged survivors like Nora from speaking out or seeking help, as they feel that they will not be believed or will be judged harshly for their experiences. These results support the findings of previous studies, which show that victim-blaming attitudes, which attribute blame to the victim rather than the perpetrator, lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and self-doubt in survivors of violence, ultimately preventing them from seeking help or reporting the abuse (Gracia, 2004; Gracia & Tomás, 2014; Martín-Fernández et al., 2018; Aborisade, 202; Rati & Ferdush, 2021).

## **4.6 Support Networks Available to the Survivors**

### **4.6.1 Formal Support**

The formal support available to the survivors of domestic violence includes only two government run shelters in Bousmail and Mostaganem, as well as five temporary accommodation centers located in Algiers, Constantine, Oran, Skikda, and Ouargla (ESCWA, 2015). It is important to note that while there are two shelters run by the government, the Bousmail and Mostaganem shelters, there is no specific budget allocated to support these shelters. In addition, these shelters often refuse to provide help to women

as they claim to have reached capacity. The five temporary accommodation centers located in Algiers, Constantine, Oran, Skikda, and Ouargla have also been reported to be no longer functioning (ESCWA, 2015). As a result, survivors have limited access to formal support, with very few options available to them. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that in a large country covering 2,381,741 square kilometers (World Bank, 2020) and a nation of 44,177.97 inhabitants (World Bank, 2021), the government operates only two shelters for survivors of domestic violence both of which are located in the north, indicating a significant gap in formal support services. For instance, Houria, a survivor of IPV, recounts her experience of trying to access the shelter of Bousmail, she said,

When I reached out to the Bousmail shelter for help, I had hoped to find safety for myself and my three children. However, despite making several calls to the shelter, an agent informed me that my town (Djelfa) was not covered by their services. It was a devastating blow, as I had nowhere else to turn for support.

This amplifies the limited reach of formal support services, especially in southern areas, and the urgent need to increase funding and resources for survivors. Interestingly, this result partially aligns with the findings of a study conducted in Utah that explored the challenges violence survivors face in seeking shelters wherein they reported repeatedly calling shelters but were unable to secure a spot due to inadequate funding and lack of available beds (Gezinski & Gonzalez-Pons, 2021).

#### **4.6.2 Informal Support**

Informal support, such as that provided by family, can be a vital resource for survivors of domestic violence. However, the findings confirmed that the availability of this support is often dependent on intersectional factors such as socioeconomic status and

cultural values. More specifically, the prevailing patriarchal values and social norms in Algeria do prevent some survivors from seeking help or receiving support from their families. For instance, despite the tough IPV violence Zakia faced, she was unable to receive help from her family, who were more concerned with preserving the family unit than addressing the abuse she endured. That is to say, it is the set of traditional cultural beliefs that led her family members to prioritize maintaining the family unit over addressing the abuse experienced by a female family member. This finding is consistent with previous research in Mexico, where it was found that the cultural norms of valuing family unity and the belief that it is a woman's duty to keep the family together that prevent the natal family from providing adequate support for survivors of IPV, and often lead to the acceptance of violence as a woman's fate (Frías & Agoff, 2015). Moreover, there is a prevailing social attitude that places stigma on divorced or unmarried women which does impact the willingness of family members to provide support to survivors of domestic violence. Alya expressed that her family's concern for the social stigma associated with divorce prevented them from supporting her. In her words, "To them, it was more important that I stayed married and endured the abuse, rather than getting divorced and freeing myself from it." This finding is in line with the prevailing social belief held by some parents that marriage is a sacred institution, which makes them hesitant to offer assistance to their daughters who are victims of intimate partner violence (Cherifa Bouatta, 2015).

However, among all the interviewees, one participant with a more privileged background, Nassima, has been able to access support from their families. In her case, her father's occupation as a public notary and her ability to make a living likely played a role in her family's decision to support her. Nevertheless, while informal support can be beneficial to survivors, it is important to recognize that not all victims may have access to such support

due to intersecting factors that may influence the attitudes and behaviors of their family members.

## **4.7 The Legal Response to Domestic Violence**

### **4.7.1 Barriers to Access to Justice**

The findings revealed that survivors do face significant obstacles when attempting to access legal protection. This result is in agreement with prior research that has shown the barriers that victims of domestic violence do encounter with legal institutions including limited availability of legal aid, lack of knowledge of the legal system, and societal stigma associated with reporting violence (Safadi et al., 2013; Clavesilla, 2014; Walklate et al., 2018; Boughima et al., 2018; Matthews & Selebano, 2020; Nurtjahyo, 2022)

Unfortunately, the Algerian legal system contributed to the normalization of domestic violence against women since it has historically been lenient towards perpetrators. Prior to 2015, perpetrators of domestic violence faced very minimal consequences, and the legal system often viewed domestic violence as a lesser offense compared to other crimes. It was only after sustained pressure from women's rights associations and advocacy groups that the Algerian Parliament passed the Law No. 15-19 criminalizing domestic violence in December 2015 (*GSG Algeria*, 2023). Whilst there is law to protect women from spousal abuse, in practice, these laws are often not enforced and mere discourse. This can be further explained by Nurtjahyo (2022) who contends that the regulations of domestic violence are reinforced at the state level but hardly ever at the policy level. For example, Nassima was the only one who was able to file a complaint against her husband for domestic violence. Yet, she encountered great obstacles. She reported that, in order to arrest her abuser, the

police required her to present a certificate issued by a forensic doctor which indicates the incapacity to work. Nassima asserted that the police dismissed her case as a private matter. Consequently, her spouse was able to escape to Tunisia and has never been held accountable for abuse. In the same vein, Babou (2019) reported that the police response is frequently inadequate, with some IPV survivors reporting that police officers were dismissive, hostile, and took them less seriously. In some cases, they were told by police officers that they cannot intervene, for the violence among spouses is a private matter.

It is worth noting that Nassima's intersectional socioeconomic background gave her a certain level of privilege in accessing justice in spite of the hurdles that challenged her. Alya, on the other hand, was unable to lodge a complaint against her abusive husband. Her intersectional socioeconomic background placed her at a disadvantage, as she lacked the necessary support from her family and resources to take legal action. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of intersectional social and economic factors of privilege and disadvantage in determining who has access to justice. It suggests that individuals who face multiple forms of oppression are less likely to have access to legal protections, leaving them vulnerable to ongoing abuse and violence.

#### **4.7.2 Inadequacy of the Law: A Critical Assessment of Legal Shortcomings**

Whilst the enactment of Law No. 15-19 was a significant step towards protecting women from violence, yet the pardon aspect read as follow: “Upon the victim's pardon, the criminal prosecution is terminated.” (GSG Algeria, 2015), permits the perpetrator to go unpunished if the victim chooses to pardon them. In this regard, assisted by a local organization, Houria filed a complaint against her spouse, yet her family in law as well as her natal family exerted pressure on her to pardon her husband. It should be noted that once

a perpetrator is pardoned, no legal action can be taken against them, leaving the survivor without any legal protection. Houria reports that her family was motivated by concerns related to social stigma, which led them to insist on her pardoning her husband. Therefore, it is imperative to reform the legal system to ensure that survivors are protected and that perpetrators of domestic violence are held accountable for their actions, regardless of the pardon aspect of the law.

Another deficiency of this law is that it fails to protect women from reproductive abuse. Zakia, for instance, was forced to have five pregnancies in order to bear her spouse a son. In spite of the physical toll, it took on her body as well as her desire to stop having children, she has no right to act legally in this matter. This is due to the fact that this legislation regards such reproductive health violence as the right of the husband rather than a form of violence. The law's failure to recognize and protect women from reproductive abuse reinforces patriarchal values and norms, perpetuating women's subordination and limiting their agency in matters related to their reproductive health. In this regard, Nurtjahyo (2022) argues that domestic violence laws are often patriarchal in their foundations.

Last but not least, such legislation only criminalizes conjugal violence and does not extend to other members of the household. This leaves both young girls and unmarried women legally unprotected from violence perpetrated by their male family members such as fathers or brothers. For instance, both Yamna and Yakout asserted that they had attempted to seek legal protection but were dismayed to learn that unmarried women are in fact not addressed in this legislation. In other words, such exclusion left them vulnerable to their natal family abuse with no legal recourse to protect themselves.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study analyzed the complex and multifaceted nature of domestic violence experienced by Algerian women. Through an intersectional lens, I have shown how the interplay of gender, social background, and economic status can shape and influence the experiences of women who are subjected to domestic violence. More specifically, the findings of my research revealed that domestic violence is a pervasive issue affecting women of all ages, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Moreover, I have also demonstrated how the pervasive societal and cultural norms perpetuate domestic violence in Algeria, reinforcing the normalization of violence within both intimate and family relationships as well as the gendered expectations of women's roles. Furthermore, this study found out that the set of the prevailing patriarchal values and social norms that prioritize family unity and stigmatize divorced and unmarried women often prevent survivors from seeking help or receiving support from their families. The study also analyzed the coping strategies adopted by Algerian women to deal with domestic violence. These strategies range from seeking support from family members and friends to remaining silent and enduring violence due to fear of reprisals or lack of alternatives. It also discussed the limited access to formal and informal support as well as analyzed the deficiencies in the legal framework governing domestic violence.

## **5.1 Implications for Social and Legal Reforms**

This thesis emphasizes the urgent need for an intersectional understanding of domestic violence and calls for a multi-dimensional approach to address the issue. Such an approach ought to take into account the intersection of gender, social background, economic status, and cultural factors. That being said, along with effective enforcement of the law, it suggests the implementation of policies and interventions, especially the provision of support services, that are tailored to the specific needs and experiences of women who face multiple forms of oppression. Furthermore, it is salient to launch government-led awareness campaigns about the negative impact of patriarchal values and norms that normalize domestic violence.

## **5.2 The Limitations of the Study**

It is important to acknowledge that this thesis, like any other academic research, has some potential limitations. To begin with, the size of the sample was relatively small and thus the findings are participatory rather than representative, especially since it was focused on a specific geographic area, namely the province of Djelfa. Moreover, due to the fact that the empirical section of this study involved self-reporting, there is a possibility that the research participants overreported or underreported their accounts with domestic violence. Furthermore, even though this thesis endeavored to examine how multiple interlocking elements such as gender, economic status, and cultural norms intersect and shape the experiences of women with violence, it is worth mentioning that there might be other intersection factors beyond the ones identified. Notwithstanding, this thesis provides valuable insights into the experiences of women with domestic violence in Algeria.



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Interview Guide

### Section One

- 1- Can you tell me about yourself?
- 2- What is the highest educational qualification you hold? What is the educational background of your parents?
- 3- What is your marital status?
- 4- What is your current occupational status?
- 5- With which social class do you identify with?

### Section Two

- 1- How do you define violence against women?
- 2- Can you tell me about your access to financial resources and whether you are able to make financial decisions independently?
- 3- How would you describe your sense of personal freedom in your daily life? Have you ever felt physically restrained to go somewhere or leave a location?
- 4- Can you tell me a bit about your family (father, brother) /partner and your relationship with them? How does your relationship with your family/partner affect your daily life and are there any issues or conflicts in your relationship with your family/partner?
- 5- Have you ever felt pressured or coerced into having sex with your partner that you did not want to engage in, and do you feel that you have control over your decisions regarding birth control, and pregnancy?
- 6- Now, can you talk about your experience of domestic violence?
- 7- How do you respond and react to the violence committed against you?

8- Have you ever felt like you needed to alter your behavior or actions to avoid physical harm or violence?

9- Have you ever sought legal action? Why & how?

10- Do you blame society or the legal system for the experience of violence you were subjected to?

## APPENDIX B: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
لجنة الأخلاقيات

### NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

**To:** Ms. Safa Difi  
Dr. Lina Kreidie  
Assistant Professor  
School of Arts and Sciences

**APPROVAL ISSUED:** 3 March 2023  
**EXPIRATION DATE:** 3 March 2024  
**REVIEW TYPE:** EXPEDITED – Initial

**Date:** January 24, 2023

**RE:** **IRB #:** LAU.SAS.LK3.3/Mar/2023

**Protocol Title:** Domestic Violence in Algeria: Women's Narratives

The above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This approval is limited to the activities described in the Approved Research Protocol and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.**

#### APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

**LAU RESEARCH POLICIES & PROCEDURES:** All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies & Procedures. **PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.**

**PROTOCOL EXPIRATION:** The LAU IRB approval expiry date is listed above. The IRB Office will send an email at least 45 days prior to protocol approval expiry - Request for Continuing Review - in order to avoid any temporary hold on the initial protocol approval. It is your responsibility to apply for continuing review and receive continuing approval for the duration of the research project. Failure to send Request for Continuation before the expiry date will result in suspension of the approval of this research project on the expiration date.

**MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS:** All protocol modifications must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

**NOTIFICATION OF SITE SPECIFIC UNEXPECTED ADVERSE EVENTS OR SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS:** Immediate prompt reporting for any site specific unexpected/unanticipated and related AE or SAE occurring to any participant in an LAU IRB approved research project, and no later than 24 hours, as described in the LAU IRB Investigator Manual Policies and Procedures and related processes.

**NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION:** A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of notification of project completion.

**IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.**

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at [irb@lau.edu.lb](mailto:irb@lau.edu.lb)

BEIRUT CAMPUS	BYBLOS CAMPUS	NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS & ACADEMIC CENTER
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The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

**Dr. Joseph Stephan**  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:**

LAU IRB Initial Protocol Application	Received 12 January 2023
Research Proposal	Received 12 January 2023, amended 3 March 2023
Letter from AVIFE/Reseau Wassila	Received 2 February 2023
Informed Consents – English – Arabic	Received 12 January 2023, amended 3 March 2023
Interview Questions - English – Arabic - French	Received 13 January 2023
<b>IRB Comments sent:</b> 12 January 2023 13 & 16 January 2023 24 January 2023 25 January 2023 2 March 2023 3 March 2023	<b>PI response to IRB's comments dated:</b> 13 January 2023 23 January 2023 24 January 2023 2 February 2023 3 March 2023 3 March 2023
CITI Training – Lina Kreidie	Cert.# 35743138 Dated (4 March 2020)
CITI Training – Safa Difi	Cert.# 53432671 Dated (13 January 2023)

