

No More Miss Perfect: Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes in the Middle East Tradition

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Abstract: Television production plays a significant role in shaping and exposing cultures around the globe. This paper is an attempt to address multiple fundamental concerns and challenges underlying TV production in the Middle East and the perception towards women in the region. The study population consists of a sample of 1010 college students at Al-Najah National University in Palestine and Zarqa Private University in Jordan. It also investigates overviews of relevant individuals and influencers. The paper findings emphasize the prevalence of an inferior view towards women in the region and media reinforcing similar notions. Recommendations provided by the researcher include organizing social and media activities to spread awareness in the communities and conducting further studies regarding women issues in culture.

Keywords: Stereotypical image, social culture, gender-based discrimination.

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Introduction

According to reports, despite some privileges women have recently restored in the Middle East, 2022 has witnessed a remarkable increase in violence against women in different ways. In Jordan, 44% of women experienced violence by male strangers in cyber-space in 2017, according to European Institute for Gender Equality.

Background

Women have been fighting for their rights since the beginning of human existence. Despite women's rights becoming widely recognized in the majority of countries, women in several communities continue to struggle to achieve their rights daily and to fight violence performed against them. According to WHO (World Health Organization), 30% of women globally have subjected to physical and/or sexual partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lives (WHO, 2021).

It has been found in several studies that The MENA region performs worse than any other region concerning

women in business and legal policies, including mobility issues (i.e., the ability to travel independently), choosing workplace, entrepreneurship, and pay. In addition to family duties and expectations, an inhospitable working environment discourages thousands of women from fighting to enter the workforce because they fear the expected low pay, insufficient workplace protections, and poor benefits in comparison with men in the same work environment (Asi, 2021).

The Arab women's participation in the Arab Spring movements has resulted in new changes. For example, they are not just housewives, wives, or mothers, but partners in the present and the future. They are rebellious and effectively demanding the rights of everyone, offering sacrifices and facing death to liberate the Arab world (Rabadi, 2014). Yet, in most of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, married women have no legal protection against marital rape. Unfortunately, social actors continue to contest the concept since even if marital rape occurs, men are usually not charged, and convictions never happen (Htun and Jensenius, 2020).

According to Bleakley and Ellithorpe, scientists at Annenberg School for Communication, teenagers are often affected by what they watch on TV. They published a study in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* in 2016 concerning the race and gender of characters in shows popular with 14- to 17-year-olds. The study focused on TV-viewing preferences and their influence on the youth. Consequently, founded evidence supported the suggestion that adolescents chose to watch TV shows with characters similar to themselves, probably due to the belief that these characters help teenagers build their being and identify their identity. Therefore, this paper's sample had been carefully selected from ages 18-22 who are known to be interested in TV shows such as *Watan Ala Watar* (Bleakley and Ellithorpe, 2016).

Methodology

A convenient sample of university students in Jordan and Palestine was used to test the study hypotheses of perceptions towards females in the region. The researcher developed a questionnaire and pretested it before its final use to gather the necessary data. She distributed the questionnaires in August 2022 through direct distribution to students in Palestine and through online forums in Jordan. Research data has been admitted into an Excel spreadsheet and then checked for accuracy. The data was imported for analysis. Frequencies, cross-tabs, and correlation analyses were conducted to assess the findings and results.

Study questions and hypothesis:

Despite women obtaining several opportunities in education and leading positions in communities, Arab communities still suffer a set of confining unfair customs and traditions to women. These notions are widely dominant in media productions that continue to affirm and promote the negative stereotypical image surrounding women in these communities in different life aspects. Therefore, the research aims at studying the following questions:

1. What is the public-stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (in Palestine and Jordan)?
2. How far does gender-related information broadcasted in the media affect genders' stereotypical images and social standards?
3. How far does the stereotypical image of women impact media productions and repercussions concerning violence practiced against women?
4. Which concepts/terms require cancellation or replacement in media productions to alter the negative stereotypical image of women?

Procedures

This chapter addresses the methodology and procedure of the researcher used to identify the study's population and sample and explains the practical actions and methods used to build and describe the study's instrument. And then, the researcher explained the scheme of the study's design and its variables, with references to the statistical tests used in the study.

Approach of the study

The researcher used the descriptive approach for its relevance to the current study in that it provides an integrated theoretical framework, as this approach describes the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) and includes an interpretation of the data and information obtained to conclude. It also discusses current events and things, whatever they may be. Its type or field the researcher implemented this approach by describing the study variables and the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Population of the study

The study's population consisted of all the students of Al-Najah National University on the West Bank in Palestine who were (10,525) male and female students, and students of Zarqa Private University in Jordan, who were (3212), according to the statistics of the Palestinian and Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education for the academic year (2021-2022 AD).

Sample of the study

The researcher used the random non-probable method to choose a sample. The sample included (1010) male and female students from the Al-Najah National University in Palestine and Zarqa Private University in Jordan.

Instrument of the study

The researcher developed a questionnaire to identify the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine). The instrument consisted of two parts: the first included preliminary data about the

respondents represented in gender, place of residence, and average income, while the second consisted of the items that measured the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine).

Procedures of the study

1. Gathering secondary information from books, articles, reports, and other sources.
2. Gathering the primary information by distributing the questionnaires to get enough information to answer the study's questions.
3. Gathering the questionnaires, verifying their validity, and excluding the irrelevant ones.
4. Computerizing the information where the researcher inserted the information into the computer using (SPSS) program, then she classified the data to be ready for analysis.
5. Treating the data after analyzing it to get information about the dependent and independent variables of the study.
6. Conducting statistical analysis that answered the questions of the study and tested the hypotheses to achieve the study's objectives.
7. Discuss the results to explain the study's findings related to the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine).

Design of the study:

Data was treated using SPSS to conduct the following statistical treatment:

1. Means and percentages for the responses
2. Independent T-test to examine the hypotheses related to gender and place of residence.
3. One-Way Analysis Variance to examine the hypothesis related to the monthly average income
4. Cronbach's Alpha to measure the stability
5. (Sample K-S) test to identify the kind of the information.
6. Person Correlation Coefficient to verify the validity of the items.

Results related to the questions of the study

To interpret the results and to determine the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine), the score ranged from (1-5) degrees, and the level classification included five periods to separate between high and low degrees. Accordingly, it involved five main domains.

The sequence of the domains based on the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine)

1. The total degree of the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) was high,

with the average value of the total percentage of respondents responding to all items in this field (69.57%).

2. The sequence of the domains based on the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East was as follows:

First: Watan Ala Watar program.

Second: Women and education.

Third: social networks.

Fourth: Women and work.

Fifth: Women and traditions.

Results related to hypotheses

There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the degree of the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) due to the gender variable. To check the hypothesis, the researcher used an independent t-test.

Research Limitations

This research paper has potential limitations. Therefore, the study results should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations: Thematic Limitation:

The stereotypical image of Arab women in the Middle East, this theme has caught the attention of the researcher, giving the significance of the phenomenon which echoes social, health, and psychological dimensions.

- **Regional Limitation:**
The study has been conducted in Palestine and Jordan.
- **Sample Limitation:**
Men and Women aged from 18-24.
- **Time Limitation:**
The year 2022, focusing mainly on the last quarter of the year.

Watan Ala Watar Content Analysis

The main reason for choosing Watan Ala Watar in this research paper is that it is a Jordanian-Palestinian comedy show that mocks reality in a satirical approach through various satirical clips shedding light on a challenging reality for men, women, youth, and the poor. It also shows Arab culture, traditions, and ambitions of the Arab community. Watan Ala Watar is widely followed by millions of viewers all over the region, especially school and university students. Imad Farajin, the leading actor and producer, has about 4 million followers on his Facebook page.

Going thoroughly through Watan Ala Watar 2022 episodes, a total of 90 implications had been found, such as verbal abuse, gender-based terminology, and physical abuse. Table (1) lists the content observation notes with coding for each episode.

Episode number	verbal	physical	gestures	Total number of implications/reoccurrences
Episode 1	1	2	1	4
Episode 2	5	0	1	6
Episode 3	0	0	1	1
Episode 4	1	0	1	2
Episode 5	3	0	1	4
Episode 6	1	0	1	2
Episode 7	2	0	2	4
Episode 8	1	1	2	2
Episode 9	0	0	1	1
Episode 10	3	0	1	4
Episode 11	0	0	2	2
Episode 12	0	0	2	2
Episode 13	1	0	0	1
Episode 14	7	0	1	8
Episode 15	6	0	0	6
Episode 16	1	0	1	2
Episode 17	2	0	0	2
Episode 18	0	0	1	1
Episode 19	3	0	1	4
Episode 20	3	1	1	5
Episode 21	4	0	0	4
Episode 22	0	1	0	1
Episode 23	3	0	1	4
Episode 24	3	0	1	4
Episode 25	2	0	0	2
Episode 26	1	0	0	1
Episode 27	1	0	1	2
Episode 28	5	0	1	6
Episode 29	1	0	0	1
Episode 30	1	0	1	2

Observations and Notes

Scenes on the TV series implied a variety of injustices against women, such as inequality in payment, as in the scene in episode 7 where the man takes 300\$ while giving the woman only 100\$. Scenes of women who are threatened to be divorced have reoccurred frequently. In addition, verbal abuse was most dominant in episodes and indicated an overview of inferiority towards women and their feelings and struggles.

Discussion

This study supports previous studies on the presence of stereotypical images against women in the region of the Middle East, especially among youth and college students. Results were consistent with what was expected regarding the societies' perceptions of women.

As usual, women are present in society in various forms and models. As usually said, media is a mirror of society that reflects what exists in reality, albeit in a framework of exaggeration and a dramatic character. We cannot expect TV series to be full of ideal characters. They are often uninteresting and unrealistic. But to reflect an image that is closer to reality and at the same time present characters and events that attract the viewer without monotony and teach lessons and sermons, assuming that there should be a diversity of characters, and that be three-dimensional.

We cannot deny the women's negative or positive stereotypical images in every country. Some of them depend on reality, and some focus on the media. Let's take the example of Saudi women. Until recently, it was globally known that they were not allowed to drive a car in their country. That was true, but it does not reflect the presence of women's truth in the public space despite this restriction on their movement. We, Saudi women, are eagerly waiting for the day of the implementation of the supreme command that allows women to drive, even if we choose not to drive cars. At least we have the right to do so.

As for the other stereotypical images of Saudi women, they are veiled, covered in black from head to toe, not allowed to leave their house without an unmarried person (Mahram), and she is not allowed to do their affairs without their guardian's permission. There is some truth in the whole matter. For example, not all Saudi women are veiled or even wear hijabs. The obligation of Mahram and guardian in some legal affairs and government departments, the domination of some men, and their misuse of the concept of the Mahram and the guardian did not prevent Saudi women from challenging their circumstances and achieving their ambitions to get the highest positions. That is, the reflected image in the media is fragmented and incomplete. We must change the reality to change this image.

In the current study, the interviews involved opinions about restoring awareness of the religious discourse and the tribal system, perpetuating several misconceptions about women, their role, status, and rights. There is also a

need to review the image of women in school curricula at all stages that show the role of women in a limited way is incompatible with change and progress happening in the community. Some women asked media institutions and others to empower women, enhance their presence in various job positions, and positively highlight their achievements and issues, not to provoke. Others blamed the women for not taking advantage of opportunities to highlight their roles and accepting what happened to them related to rights abuse and exploitation. Consequently, it is necessary to pass laws, regulations, and codes of honor to preserve rights and dignity.

Conclusions

The researcher conducted interviews with a number of prominent figures and influencers, including Imad Farajin, Tariq Hamdan, Nuha Ziadah, Sama Oweida and Samar AlShinnar. Connections and conclusions have been established between the questionnaire's results and the interviews.

Tariq believes women's essential responsibility as community expects revolves around home and children. Samar thinks women are partners to men and can lead several leading roles in societies. This result is consistent with the findings of the first question that the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) was high, indicating an inferior view of women by Arab societies, especially in Jordan and Palestine. Men are more confident than women. It is not acceptable for women to go out to work at night in these communities.

Tariq thinks that women have not achieved their legal rights yet nor obtained sufficient work opportunities. Nuha shares that belief with Tariq and explains how women are usually viewed as burdens rather than partners, as women in the Jordanian parliament only represent 11%.

This result is consistent with the findings of the questionnaire in the domain of women and works in that women can hold high-level positions in municipal councils. Women have fewer opportunities for professional development than men at work. They must have high achievements and qualifications to obtain a job promotion. Therefore, women must face more challenging situations than men in these communities.

As for violations against women, Tariq notes how physical and sexual violence against women exists in these communities. He also affirms that denying women the right to work or get an education is a violation. The responses of Samar show agreement as she emphasized the importance of achieving women's rights, such as the right to inheritance and independence. On the other hand, Imad assured that by presenting scenes of injustice against women, they aim to shed light upon injustices against women.

This result is consistent with the findings of the questionnaire in the domain of women and traditions concerning that the public media contributes to revealing violations of women's rights by supporting women's achievement

of justice and equality. Women in your community can inform the concerned authorities if they or others encounter harassment or sexual violence. You can do this when you face passive situations in your surroundings due to being a man or a woman.

Nuha assumes media and TV productions are some of the resources of a society's awareness. Tariq states that the culture in these communities and traditions allows such TV shows to become more popular. This result is consistent with the results of the questionnaire in the domain of the Watan Ala Watar program in that males always appear to be in control. We must continuously address the issues of violence against women through various programs.

Nuha believes there is a notion of inferiority against women in these societies, while Samar emphasizes the challenges various women still face despite obtaining high degrees or excellent work positions.

This result is consistent with the results of the questionnaire in the domain of the Watan Ala Watar program in that males always appear to be in control. We must continuously address the issues of violence against women through various programs, for example, comedy programs, and encourage producing more programs similar to Watan Ala Watar in the future.

Tariq emphasizes how the TV industry is a significant force when it starts spreading awareness. Similarly, Imad states that comedy speaks for communities and pushes for people to discuss community issues.

This result agreed with the results of the questionnaire that satirical comedy and vitriolic criticism are official spokespeople for community issues. When you hear about crimes against women, you interact with them through comments or posts. You can also interact and express your views regarding violence against women with complete freedom in your country.

The result of the question is consistent with the results of the questionnaire in that the media, especially commercial advertisements, television dramas, and caricatures perpetuate the inferior view of women as trivial and superficial. They claim that women have nothing to do except shop, care about their beauty and appearance, enjoy their time with their friends, and plot against each other. On the other hand, they show their roles as wives, mothers, or a weak and submissive housewife. Even serious programs like news and talk-show programs often focus more on the presenter's looks than her skills and culture. Discussion raged somewhat, especially among the participating men, concerning these stereotyped images of existing models of women in society. As for the role of a devoted wife and mother, we are proud of such an image, so why not show it?

Samar agrees that women in the Middle East are endangered due to the lack of legal protection for women. The result is consistent with the questionnaire's results that the media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, raising awareness, and affecting decision-makers. The images of the Islamic world, Islam, and Muslims are nearly negative, distorted, superficial, stereotypical, and often ignored as being portrayed by the media.

Recommendations

The study made several recommendations, including:

1. Benefit from the successful experiences in the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on enhancing the role of women in society through establishing a network of female media professionals under the supervision of the Organization and documenting the achievements of women pioneers.
2. Release a periodic report on women in the media and prepare a manual guide on best practices to empower women in media institutions and through the media.
3. Organize media activities to correct misinformation and stereotypes about Muslim women in the Western media.
4. Conduct studies on women in the media in member countries and Muslim women in the Western media.

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Appendixes.

Table 1. Description of the study sample based on its independent variables (n=500)

Independent variables	Levels of the variable	F	(%)
Gender	Male	334	33.0
	Female	676	67.0
	Total	1010	100%
Place of residence	Jordan	491	49.0
	Palestine	519	51.0
	Total	1010	100%
Average income	>200 JD / 1000 NIS	136	13.0
	200 JD / 1000 NIS - >400 JD / 2000 NIS	154	15.0
	400 JD. / 2000 NIS - >400 JD / 3000 NIS	124	12.0
	600 JD / 3000 NIS - >800 JD / 4000 NIS	321	32.0
	800 JD / 4000 NIS - >1000 JD / 5000 NIS	193	19.0
	≤ 1000 JD / 5000 NIS	82	9.0
	Total	1010	100%

Table 2. Distribution of the instrument's items on its main theme.

DOMAIN	ITEM NO. IN THE DIMENSION	NUMBER OF ITEMS
Woman and work	12-1	12
Woman and education	8-1	8
Woman and traditions	12-1	12
Watan Ala Watar (TV. program)	10-1	10
Social media	8-1	8
Total		50

Table 3. Values of the internal consistency validity coefficients for the items of the dimensions of the study and the total degree of the dimension

Item	Correlation with the dimension	Sig.	item	Correlation with the dimension	Sig.	item	Correlation with the dimension	Sig.
1	.643**0	0.00*	18	.721**0	0.00*	35	.698**0	0.00*
2	.619**0	0.00*	19	.672**0	0.00*	36	.720**0	0.00*
3	.681**0	0.00*	20	.533**0	0.00*	37	.589**0	0.00*

4	.690**0	0.00*	21	.582**0	0.00*	38	.573**0	0.00*
5	.680**0	0.00*	22	.669**0	0.00*	39	.721**0	0.00*
6	.621**0	0.00*	23	.813**0	0.00*	40	.732**0	0.00*
7	.632**0	0.00*	24	.530**0	0.00*	41	.532**0	0.00*
8	.715**0	0.00*	25	.692**0	0.00*	42	.813**0	0.00*
9	.734**0	0.00*	26	.580**0	0.00*	43	.672**0	0.00*
10	.582**0	0.00*	27	.720**0	0.00*	44	.533**0	0.00*
11	.580**0	0.00*	28	.589**0	0.00*	45	.632**0	0.00*
12	.813**0	0.00*	29	.670**0	0.00*	46	.715**0	0.00*
13	.681**0	0.00*	30	.630**0	0.00*	47	.619**0	0.00*
14	.721**0	0.00*	31	.690**0	0.00*	48	.589**0	0.00*
15	.690**0	0.00*	32	.589**0	0.00*	49	.734**0	0.00*
16	.680**0	0.00*	33	.580**0	0.00*	50	.669**0	0.00*
17	.582**0	0.00*	34	.560**0	0.00*			

**The correlation is statistically significant at the significance level (0.01) * Significant at the significance level (0.05)

Table 4. Results of stability coefficient test by Cronbach's Alpha method on the dimensions of the instrument

α	Number of items	Domain
0.895	12	Woman and work
0.794	8	Woman and education
0.767	12	Woman and traditions
0.810	10	Watan ala Watar (TV. program)
0.862	8	Social media
0.825	50	Total score

Table 5. the significance value for all domains of the study were greater than (sig. > 0.05), indicating that the data follows a normal distribution. (1-Sample K-S) test

Sign.	Z	Domain
.710	.7000	Woman and work
.890	.5730	Woman and education
.970	.4860	Woman and traditions
0.87	0.542	Watan ala Watar (TV. program)
0.83	0.369	Social media
.850	.5340	Total score

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the score of stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on woman and work domain, arranged in descending order by score.

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1	Women can choose any job they want.	3.8509	1.03809	77.02	High
2	Women have better opportunities in the west comparing to theirs in their countries.	3.6708	1.09987	73.42	Hugh
3	Women have equal opportunities with men at work.	3.5528	1.14510	71.06	High
4	Women can run in elections with equal opportunities to men in your country.	3.3333	1.09495	66.60	Moderate
5	Women can hold high-level positions in municipal councils.	3.2410	1.11721	64.80	Moderate
6	Men have greater job security than women.	3.2169	1.20531	64.30	Moderate
7	Women have fewer opportunities for professional development than men at work.	3.1767	1.10757	63.50	Moderate
8	Men get higher salaries than women for the same work.	3.1526	1.09655	63.00	Moderate
9	Men get better appreciation and support than women in the same work.	3.1442	1.09578	62.34	Moderate
10	Women must have high achievements and qualifications in order to get a promotion at work compared to men.	3.1342	1.09369	62.10	Moderate
11	Women must have high qualifications to achieve professional development at work compared to men.	3.0884	1.07774	61.70	Moderate
12	I might leave my job in the future if I face gender pressures and gender discrimination.	3.0803	1.14016	61.60	Moderate
Total degree of the domain (Woman and work)		3.3035	1.10933	65.95	Moderate

Table 7. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the degree of stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on woman and education domain, arranged in descending order by score.

sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1	Women have equal opportunities with men in education in your country.	4.2422	.827470	82.44	High
2	Men often make decisions about women's	4.2158	.818580	82.00	High

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
	education.				
3	Women can choose any field of education they desire.	3.9565	.950970	79.13	High
4	It is not acceptable for a woman to travel alone for the purpose of education	3.9325	.945250	78.56	High
5	Educated women are more aware of their rights compared to uneducated women.	3.9112	.941240	76.25	High
6	The more aware women are, the less likely they are to be subjected to violence or abuse.	3.7764	1.03667	75.53	High
7	There is no discrimination between men and women in educational institutions such as universities.	3.6770	1.05239	73.54	High
8	It is noticeable that the ratio of educated women in your country increased compared to previous years.	3.4534	1.10085	69.07	High
Total degree of the domain (Woman and education)		3.8934	0.96174	77.18	High

Table 8. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the degree of stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on woman and traditions domain, arranged in descending order by score.

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1	Public media contributes to exposing violations of women's rights by supporting women's achievement of justice and equality.	2.8878	1.36898	55.82	Moderate
2	A woman has to prioritize her home and family first and work later.	2.8524	1.36787	55.66	Moderate
3	Women in your community can report to the relevant authorities if they or others are subjected to harassment or sexual violence	2.7524	1.36598	55.23	Moderate
4	Women in your community can report the concerned authorities if they or others are subjected to violence (verbal, psychological or physical).	2.7142	1.36325	55.23	Moderate
5	Men get higher confidence compared to women.	2.6444	1.36204	52.89	Moderate

6	It is not acceptable for women to go out to work at night in your community.	2.4400	1.31516	48.80	Moderate
7	Women face a greater risk of “honor crimes” in this society than men do.	2.3778	1.36423	47.56	Moderate
8	In this society, there is a negative view about women in general.	2.3733	1.35396	47.47	Moderate
9	Social culture prevents the professional development of women in your community.	2.2311	1.31268	44.62	Moderate
10	In your surroundings, you encountered negative situations because of being a man/woman.	2.2222	1.29713	44.44	Moderate
11	Women have more freedom in the West than in your country.	2.1911	1.21887	43.82	Moderate
12	Women commit suicide more than men.	2.0400	1.42152	40.80	Moderate
Total degree of the domain (Woman and traditions)		2.4772	1.34263	49.36	Moderate

Table 9. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the degree of stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on Watan Ala Watar program domain, arranged in descending order by score.

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1	I watched several episodes of Watan Ala Watar.	4.5987	.583690	84.69	High
2	Watan Ala Watar addressed violence against women in its episodes.	4.5145	.571210	84.16	High
3	The actors in Watan Ala Watar demonstrated racial discrimination against women in their performance.	4.4400	.561400	83.77	High
4	The expressions of discrimination against women were repeated in more than one episode of Watan Ala Watar.	4.3667	.508690	83.65	High
5	The scenes of ridicule of women were repeated in Watan Ala Watar	4.1533	.482840	83.00	High
6	Males in Watan Ala Watar seem smarter and better than the women.	4.1400	.434890	82.66	High
7	Males in Watan Ala Watar show that they	4.1369	.432250	82.00	High

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
	are always dominant.				
8	Men often make the firm decisions in Watan Ala Watar.	3.8133	.365070	76.11	High
9	Issues of violence against women should be addressed continually through various programs such as comedy programs.	3.5800	0.10076	71.52	High
10	You encourage producing more of such programs that are similar to Watan Ala Watar in the future.	3.5733	0.10123	71.12	High
Total degree of the domain (Watan Ala Watar Program)		4.1316	0.41420	80.26	High

Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the degree of stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on social media domain, arranged in descending order by score.

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1	You heard about news and information regarding crimes against women in your country from social networks.	4.0000	1.12599	80.00	High
2	When you hear about crimes against women, you react to it through comments or posts.	3.9600	1.28980	79.20	High
3	You don't show any reaction to crimes against women in your country.	3.8667	1.16496	77.33	High
4	You post about violence and attacks against women in your community on social media.	3.8044	1.19783	76.09	High
5	Freedom of expression on social media is restricted in your country.	3.6578	1.23680	73.16	High
6	Social media contributes to increasing knowledge about the injustice experienced by women in your community.	3.6533	1.42202	73.07	High
7	Social networks encourage women to become more aware of their rights in your country.	3.6089	1.36536	72.18	High
8	You can interact and express your views on violence against women with complete freedom in your	3.5022	1.35332	70.04	High

Sequence	Item	μ	SD.	%	Degree
	country.				
	Total degree of the domain (social media)	3.7566	1.26951	75.13	High

Table 11. Sequence of the domains based on the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East, arranged in descending order by score.

Z	o	Domains	μ	SD.	%	Degree
1		Woman and work	3.3035	1.10933	65.95	Moderate
2		Woman and education	3.8934	0.96174	77.18	Moderate
3		Woman and traditions	2.4772	1.34263	49.36	Low
4		Watan Ala Watar (TV program)	4.1316	0.41420	80.26	High
5		Social media	3.7566	1.26951	75.13	High
		Total degree	3.5124	1.01948	69.57	High

Table 12. Results of the t-test for the significance of the differences and means for the degree of the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on the gender variable.

Gender	Maled (n=334)		Females (n=676)		(t)	Sig.
	μ	SD.	μ	SD.		
Woman and work	3.8000	.913780	4.0469	.804900	-0.620	.530
Woman and education	3.9576	.913450	4.0484	.683550	-1.730	.080
Woman and traditions	5.2144	1.25466	6.2547	0.98575	4.236	*0.02
Watan Ala Watar (TV> program)	3.2548	0.85423	3.6985	0.65498	1.278	0.20
Social media	3.2667	.715310	3.7859	.658410	1.226	.220
Total degree	3.8000	.913780	3.8589	.484450	-0.979	.320

Place of residence	Jordan (n=491)		Palestine (n=676)		(t)	Sig.
	μ	SD.	μ	SD.		
Woman and work	3.7585	.896960	4.2365	.748770	-0.770	.610
Woman and education	3.5688	.754540	5.2147	.565650	-1.887	.090
Woman and traditions	6.2547	1.25554	7.2545	0.99879	5.235	*0.03
Watan Ala Watar	3.2589	0.68955	3.3332	0.52444	1.221	0.32
Social media	4.1255	.724140	3.5878	.365890	1.334	.280
Total degree	3.7255	.865680	3.79663	.472210	-0.888	.350

Table 13. Means of the degree of the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) based on the monthly average income variable.

Monthly average income / Domains	>200 JD / 1000 NIS	200 JD / 1000 NIS - > 400 JD / 2000NIS	400 JD / 2000 NIS - > 600 JD / 3000 NIS	600 JD / 3000 NIS- > 800 JD / 4000 NIS	800 JD / 4000 NIS - > 1000 JD / 5000 NIS	≤ 1000 JD / 5000 NIS
	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ	μ
Woman and work	4.1481	3.9884	4.0400	4.2365	3.9865	3.5787
Woman and education	4.1405	4.2334	4.0964	4.2514	3.4521	3.5655
Woman and traditions	3.5390	3.5512	3.6786	3.8574	4.1456	4.2225
Watan Ala Watar program	3.4578	3.4687	4.6985	3.6985	3.7414	3.6987
Social media	4.2154	3.7474	4.3254	4.1212	3.2658	3.4578
Total degree	3.9425	3.9243	3.9383	4.0120	3.5645	3.8659

Table 14 Results One-Way ANOVA analysis for the significance of the differences in the degree of the stereotypical image of the woman in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine) due to the monthly average income variable.

MONTHLY AVERAGE INCOME	VARIATION SOURCES	SQUARES TOTAL	FREEDOM SCORES	SD.	F	SIG.
Woman and work	Between groups	.4870	4	.1630	0.369	.360
	Within the groups	40.136	1005	.2540		
	Total	41.587	1009			
Woman and education	Between groups	0.424	4	0.106	0.421	0.47
	Within the groups	21.263	1005	0.049		
	Total	22.363	1009			
Woman and traditions	Between groups	0.078	4	0.210	0.326	0.31
	Within the groups	20.142	1005	0.395		
	Total	21.342	1009			
Watan Ala Watar (TV. program)	Between groups	.0690	4	.1120	0.241	0.42
	Within the groups		1005	.0410		

	Total	21.029				
		22.211	1009			
Social media	Between groups	.6330	4	.2110	.5250	.550
	Within the groups	22.241	1005	.4140		
	Total	23.252	1009			
Total degree	Between groups	.0110	4	.0120	.1580	.460
	Within the groups		1005	.1890		
	Total	24.526				
		25.312	1009			

Table 15 shows number of reoccurrences of scenes of acts or gestures practiced against women or insinuating gender-based injustice and their variations. The table listed is the content observation notes in relation to different types of implications of gesture, verbal or physical abuse or gender-related comments made against women in episodes discussed.

Episode number	verbal	physical	gestures	Total number of implications/reoccurrences
Episode 1	1	2	1	4
Episode 2	5	0	1	6
Episode 3	0	0	1	1
Episode 4	1	0	1	2
Episode 5	3	0	1	4
Episode 6	1	0	1	2
Episode 7	2	0	2	4
Episode 8	1	1	2	2
Episode 9	0	0	1	1
Episode 10	3	0	1	4
Episode 11	0	0	2	2
Episode 12	0	0	2	2
Episode 13	1	0	0	1
Episode 14	7	0	1	8
Episode 15	6	0	0	6
Episode 16	1	0	1	2
Episode 17	2	0	0	2
Episode 18	0	0	1	1
Episode 19	3	0	1	4
Episode 20	3	1	1	5
Episode 21	4	0	0	4

Episode 22	0	1	0	1
Episode 23	3	0	1	4
Episode 24	3	0	1	4
Episode 25	2	0	0	2
Episode 26	1	0	0	1
Episode 27	1	0	1	2
Episode 28	5	0	1	6
Episode 29	1	0	0	1
Episode 30	1	0	1	2

Episode 1

‘If you truly love me, you would announce our marriage’. (Min: 01:23)

‘Oh these pretty women on the roof’. (3:23)

A woman hitting another for betraying her with her husband. (9:42)

The man hits a woman for not paying her dues.(10:56)

Episode 2

‘No men allowed’ the sign says. (01:12)

Verbal harassment of a woman ‘hairless chicken’. (02:15)

A woman telling her husband : ‘How long do you intend to go after that woman?’. (2:30)

‘I wish you would go to hell’, the man tells his wife. (03:00)

‘ If you want me to divorce my wife, I’ll do it’. (08:56)

‘ I shall hit you and knock your sight out!’, the man tells a woman. (10:02)

Episode 3

‘This is my wife’s car I told you, while I go to work and back on foot.’, the man tells the mechanic. (03:03)

Episode 4

‘I was in love with a hairstylist once but my parents disapproved our marriage because she was 2 months older than me and they feared she would fool me.’ The man says when he proposed to a lady for marriage.(05:54).

‘It’s none of your business!’, a man says to his wife as she was giving birth while he was hitting on the nurse.(08:30).

Episode 5

‘I would like to tell you that you are divorced from this moment on’, the man tells his wife.(03:02).

Men say to a woman that due to plastic surgeries they were unable to recognize that she was the man’s wife not his daughter.(05:36).

‘Shut up you have no clue!’, he says to his mother. (06:30).

‘You are divorced for a second time now’, a man tells his wife for disagreeing with him. (07:07).

Episode 6

‘What a lovely body!’ (12:16)

‘He dances with my wife and I dance with his, what a shame!’(13:14)

Episode 7

‘When 5 girls saw me, they dropped themselves from windows!’, a man says proudly pointing out how handsome he is. (01:35).

A man shouting at his wife: ‘Does it take you an hour to open the door, Jawaher? An hour?’, (05:41)

‘And you should divorce this woman’, a man tells his friend because his friend’s wife brought a man home. (07:14).

‘Yes, 100 dollars for you, lady! What do you want a 1000 dollars?’, the man tells a woman as he gave her a 100 dollars while he took 300 dollars for himself. (08:20).

Episode 8

‘If I hear that you talk to other girls I will shoot you in the head’, a woman tells the man she loves. (06:45)

A woman pulls a woman and knocks her to the ground after she found out she was having an affair with her husband (13:00).

‘Shut up!’ the woman shouts. (13:28).

Episode 9

‘All the ladies in the neighborhood love the lizard ring, they just adore it!’, the jewelry shop owner tells the lady. (02:42)

Episode 10

‘ I bet on my mustache that you won’t last fasting even until 11:00 am today.(then laughs aloud)’ speaking to his daughter (01:39).

‘I bet on my mustache that you won’t even last fasting until 10:00 am you skinny girl’ tells his daughter again (03:38).

‘ I divorce you!’ he tells his wife for arguing with her mother in law. ‘I swear I shall slap your face’ he tells her (07:12).

‘ I have no idea why the girl is short while you and I are tall!’ doubting his wife’s morality (07:31).

Episode 11

The man was saying to his wife: ‘I don’t like tuna pizza why should I get you one?’(02:34)

The man clearly showed males engaging in stereotypical gender related behaviors implying he didn’t intend to get the pizza his wife wanted just because he didn’t like it as well.

The man telling his wife he has married another wife. She is in shock but responds: ‘I had a feeling you would do it, yet I won’t cry.’ (09:20).

The man kept mocking her reactions until he told her that her mother has passed away earlier. She took the news way better than she handled her husband marrying another woman. The situation mocks women’s feelings when husbands approach annoying actions. As if all that matters to a woman in life is her husband. Nothing else compares.

Episode 12

A father is asking his daughter to accept to marry her friend’s husband because the man who had promised to come propose to her didn’t keep up his word. He asked her to say yes only for one day so people don’t spread rumors about her being abandoned by a man. The scene sheds light upon Arab culture and honor-related issues. (04:20).

The friend’s husband talks to his second bride revealing a hidden plan they both agreed upon. ‘Didn’t I promise you to marry you with your friend’s consent who danced in our wedding like a fool?’, he stated (09:32).

The term ‘fool’ depicts a notion where a woman is inferior to a man. Her feelings and mind are less important and her opinions are not valued.

Episode 13

‘I swear on my marriage that this is the first time I see you!’ (10:48).

The teacher was wondering if he had seen the student before. He swore on his marriage that it was the first time he saw that student.

Swearing on a man’s marriage is a widely known habit in the Arab community. It notions no significance of someone’s marriage and although it is not acceptable from a religious point of view, several husbands tend to do it when they are angry or furious to experience rage. Women have no choice but to abide by these words and follow their husbands wishes or they will be instantly considered divorced.

Episode 14

An old woman is being harassed in the street by a couple of robbers and she calls for help.

One of the robbers steals her yellow scarf (01:15).

A man comes to rescue and the robbers flee. Then he starts asking the woman : ‘Where are you from sweet?’ (01:48).

An older guy passes by while the man who rescued the woman is putting back her yellow scarf on her shoulders. He sees them and says: ‘Shame on you! Don’t you have families?’ (02:14).

The woman’s father tells the man who rescued her: ‘People have seen you with my daughter putting the scarf on her shoulder. You should marry her by our customs as you know.’ (03:20).

‘Do you accept that if it were your sister?’ (03:37).

‘If it’s ok if your sister was in my sister’s shoes, then it’d be ok by me’ (03:51).

The scenes mentioned in this episode definitely emphasis the culture of honor-related crimes and the Arab mentality.

‘Shut up!’ The man tells his sister (07:02).

‘She is insane!’ (07:07).

The man says to his wife for forgetting how many children she has. The term ‘insane’ is used in a funny matter usually but it indicates inferiority.

‘I can’t say a word until my guardian comes’ (07:42).

The scene touches on a woman being incomplete needing a parent or a guardian to speak for her in a variety of situations.

Episode 15

‘Do not take women as hostages!’ (02:07).

A widely known ritual in Arab wars and conflicts is not to take women or elderly or children as hostages. In this scene, if men took women as hostages, they would appear weak and lose their respect.

‘Carry her, my children’ ‘How will we carry her? It would take a crane to carry her!’(05:35).

Numerous shows and comedies adopt the theme of weight-based teasing in their scenes. This is surely a form of verbal abuse against women socially the woman in the scene being pregnant.

‘bring out her hair extensions’ (06:14).

As a woman was about to give birth, he husband asks her son to bring her hair extensions and makeup. This only emphasizes making fun of women’s obsession with beauty and makeup in times like these.

‘I would never walk in on her ,she will keep cursing me’ (07:27).

The husband stated this line as his wife was giving birth and his son asked him to go inside. In this scene is a clear indication that this is a community that tends to ridicule women’s aches and pregnancy and their expression of their frustration during that phase of their lifetime.

‘Come one push! No nagging I’m telling you! Push!’ ,the doctor shouts at the woman giving birth (08:13).

The female doctor was telling the woman giving birth as well to push. ‘No whining! Push !’ (08:19). Again in this scene is a clear indication of mocking women’s pains and aches during pregnancy and birth.

Episode 16

‘We want no dowry, nor wedding nor gold ! Take the girl as she is since she is starting to lose her sight and hearing!’ (09:20).

This excellently delivered scene depicts a culture where marriage is a woman’s only answer and getaway. To some families, daughters get married for little or no demands and they completely lose their rights. Allowing men to practice more power over them while women end up helpless.

Episode 17

The man screaming in his wife’s face:’ Aaaaah I am sure you haven’t checked the cooking gas!’(01:41).

This scene points out women being intellectually inferior to a man. Therefore, mocking their decisions and words in home matters for example.

The other man shouts in his wife’s face: ‘Did you check the cooking gas at home? Get up!’ (06:30).

The reoccurrence of the situation only emphasizes the notion of women being intellectually and emotionally

inferior to men.

Episode 18

‘Did you leave some food for me?’, the mom asks her family (02:06).

Episode 19

‘Did you forget when your family had me marry you and told me they found relief that they got rid of you?’, the man tells his wife. (03:29).

‘Did you forget when your family told me that you don’t fit in any trousers?’, the man tells his wife (03:39).

‘I will divorce you twice!’ a man tells his wife (03:55).

‘I will divorce her now!’ he tells his friend because his wife defended the waiter and how her husband addressed him (08:24).

Episode 20

In this episode, the cast is ridiculing the film ‘Perfect Strangers’.

‘Because I am her mother, I should search her bag’ the woman tells her husband (03:11).

The actor takes off his pants in parallel to Muna Zaki’s scene in Perfect Strangers when she removes his underwear (04:43).

‘My friend is a fool! He should have deleted the message so his wife doesn’t see it’ the man speaks out loud. His friend’s wife responds: ‘Isn’t that considered treason?’ (06:30).

‘She will do a plastic surgery on her nose’ the man comments (08:53).

Episode 21

‘Our neighbor, Deema used to have a fringe so solid like cement.’ The man raises his hand mimicking a tower (04:18).

‘I see an airport!’ the man ridicules his fiancé’s girlfriend looks (12:10).

‘Your friends are so pretty especially the dude in red, I mean the lady in red’ insinuating he thought she were so ugly that he assumed she was a man (12:19).

‘Why do makeup artists make brides look like witches?’ (13:26).

Episode 22

A man bumped into a woman in the street then touches her hand (01:11).

Episode 23

‘I assumed some pretty chick would pass by’ the man insinuates he wishes a woman would sit next to him in the bus instead of a man (01:53).

‘Remove that bath sponge you have over your head!’ the man tells the woman in the bus (03:08).

‘I wish I were your pillow’ the man tells the woman (05:15).

‘I love you and miss you!’ the man tells the girl then he tells the policeman: ‘let’s have some fun’ (11:17).

Episode 24

‘Foreign ladies are much less trouble, man!’ he tells his friend (01:18).

‘No offence but looking at your wife, we can see your taste in women’ he tells his friend (01:30).

‘She is dying to be with someone’ a man says about a woman he met at a restaurant (02:47).

‘Thank God the marriage didn’t work out!’ (09:33).

Episode 25

‘Leave me with the maid please, grandma’ he tells his grandmother (06:44).

‘Send me your photos, trust me’ a man tells a woman he has known for 3 minutes (12:24).

Episode 26

‘Are you in a relationship?’ the delivery guy asks the girl (05:38).

Episode 27

‘Do you think I’m a woman in a skirt?’ he tells his friend who was doubting his abilities with a smirk (03:55).

Episode 28

‘I don’t like how she looks, let’s see the second’ a woman says about a possible bride for their son (03:25).

‘Oh she is really not pretty!’ the father says about the possible bride’s sister. Then his wife comments: ‘No, son she is too thick to have children!’ (03:38).

‘This one is blonde and beautiful!’ the mother says about the third girl (03:55).

‘Ok, I will manage with this bride until you find me someone better’ the man tells his parents (04:56).

The man comes home with a new wife because his first wife didn’t get pregnant after 3 days of the wedding (07:12).

‘I don’t like that one, she is out!’ the son says about a wife of his 4 wives standing before him (10:08).

Episode 29

‘She is driving me insane, man ! She keeps calling me’ the man tells his friends. His friend responds: ‘ Cast a magic spell on her, my wife now sleeps at 8:00 pm!’ (01:47).

Episode 30

‘I will charge you for having the opportunity to flirt with my wife while she was at the hotel for 10 days but you didn’t take it.’, a man tells the hotel worker (05:52).

‘You shall milk the goats whether you like it or not, or you will go to your family’s home divorced’, a man tells his wife (06:26).

English Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire has been designed with the aim of carrying out independent scientific investigations concerning the stereotypical image of women in the Middle East (Jordan and Palestine in particular). The data collected will be handled with secrecy and will not be used for any other purposes. We dearly value your time and cooperation.

Personal Data

Please circle the appropriate answer:

1. Gender: a. male b. female

2. Country of Residence: a. Palestine b. Jordan

3. Average monthly income:
 - a. Less than 200JD/1000NIS
 - b. 200-400 JD/1000-2000NIS
 - c. 400-600JD/2000-3000NIS
 - d. 600-800JD/3000-4000NIS
 - e. 800-1000JD/4000-5000NIS
 - f. 1000+JD/5000+NIS

4. Please put (x) in the space that matches your perspective:

Women and Work

Question	I strongly agree	I agree	neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. Women can choose any work they want in your country.					
2. Women have					

better opportunities in the West than they do in your country.					
3. Women have equal work opportunities with men in your country.					
4. Women can run for elections equally as men in your country.					
5. Women can occupy high level positions in municipal councils in your country.					
6. Men have better job security than women.					
7. Women have less professional development opportunities than men.					
8. Men receive higher salaries than women in the same jobs.					
9. Men are more					

appreciated and supported than women on the same jobs.					
10. Women have to be high qualified and achieved in order to earn a promotion at work in comparison with men.					
11. Women have to obtain high qualifications in order to achieve professional development.					
12. You may consider quitting your work if you encounter gender-based discrimination issues.					

Women and Education

Question	I strongly agree	I agree	neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. Women have equal education					

opportunities as men in your country.					
2. Men usually make education related decisions for women in your country.					
3. Women have the freedom to pick any field of study they want.					
4. It is not acceptable for a woman to travel alone to study.					
5. Well-educated women are usually more aware of their rights than women who are not educated.					
6. The more educated women are, the less likely they are to be treated with abuse or violence.					
7. There is no discrimination between men and women in educational					

institutes such as universities in your country.					
8. There is a noticeable increase in the percentage of educated women in your country compared to previous years.					

Women and Customs

Question	I strongly agree	I agree	neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. There is an overall negative perception of women in your society.					
Women enjoy more freedom in the West than in your country.					
3. In your surroundings, you have encountered negative situations due to your gender.					
Men are treated with greater trust in comparison with women.					

Women tend to commit suicide more than men do.					
6. Public information contributes to expose violations of women's rights and supports women's achievement of justice and equality.					
Women have to prioritize their families and homes over work.					
Social culture prevents women from achieving professional development in your country.					
9. It is unacceptable for women to go to their work at nighttime.					
Women in your country can report any harassment or sexual abuse practiced against them to					

competent authorities.					
Women in your country can report any verbal, physical or psychological abuse practiced against them to competent authorities.					
Women face the risk of 'honor killing' more than men do in your community.					

Comedy TV Series: Watan Ala Watar

Question	I strongly agree	I agree	neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. I have watched several episodes of Watan Ala Watar.					
2. Watan Ala Watar has touched upon violence against women in its episodes.					
3. Actors in Watan Ala Watar have shown gender based discrimination against women during their acting.					
4. Terminology					

of discrimination against women has reoccurred in several episodes of Watan Ala Watar.					
5. Scenes of ridiculing women have reappeared on Watan Ala Watar.					
6. Males on the show are viewed to be smarter and better than females.					
7. Males on the show appear to be always in control of matters.					
8. Men mostly make all the decisive decisions in Watan Ala Watar.					
9. Violence against women should be persistently addressed through a variety of shows such as comedies.					
10. You encourage the launch of similar shows like Watan Ala Watar in future.					

Social Media Networks

Question	I strongly agree	I agree	neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. You					

have come across news of crimes against women in your country via social media networks.					
2. You react to news of crimes against women by posting or commenting.					
3. You show no reaction towards crimes against women in your country.					
4. You usually share information about crimes and assaults against women on your social media platforms.					
5. There is a restriction of freedom of expression on social media networks in your country.					
6. Social media networks contribute to raising					

awareness of injustice against women in your community.					
7. Social media networks encourage women to become more aware of their rights in your community.					
8. You are completely free to express your perceptions and views concerning violence against women in your country.					

All Done

Thank you

Interviews

Dr. Sama Oweida Interview 30-7-2022

I am Sama Oweida, the Director-General of the Palestinian Centre for Women Studies. I have a BA in Business Management from Beirzeit University, and a master's degree from College University in London and majored in planning. I have been a feminist activist with the Palestinian Women's Labour Committee institutions in 1978. I pursued my activism to be one of the co-founders of the Palestinian Centre for Women Studies which I now run. In addition, I am a writer and a researcher. I have published several books about women in Intifada and 14 stories for children mainly promoting the center's programs regarding social equality and resisting violence in all forms and sexual harassment.

Khalida:

All the best to you, Dr. Now, of course since the discussion revolves around women's stereotyping in the region and in the Middle East in particular. As we are discussing the topic in Palestine, and as an experienced academic in the field of teaching, how do you perceive the overview of women in the Palestinian society?

Dr. Sama:

This question surely rises in the meantime as the stereotypical image of Palestinian women has changed over the years. During the 1948 war and Nakba, the perception of Palestinian women had been fairly positive as women took part in every form of struggle against the occupation, playing a major role in the reestablishment of the Palestinian community and working from abroad such as the Gulf to support their families. Unfortunately, that perception of women has taken a negative aspect lately mainly due to obscurantist forces which keep on expanding within our community aiming to achieve interests of hostile forces targeting neutralization of women from the struggle and to re-imposition the segregation of Palestinian women. The segregation has not succeeded, yet it still serves in breaking the stereotypical image of women.

If we compare the situation of Palestinian women in the past to it in the meantime, we can clearly state that women are still struggling as resistance has always been a priority for them in terms of making families and actively participating in the society. However, the negative overview towards women remains with attempts to segregate women whose participation and existence can be viewed as a threat to any party who antagonizes the Palestinian cause.

This does not mean in any way that the stereotypical image of Palestinian women is entirely negative. In fact, national forces in Palestine hold a positive image of women due to their prominent roles in families, society and struggle in general.

Without a doubt, women participation in work is huge. However, speaking of women accessing higher level positions remains controversial as women have to fight their way through struggle positions.

Khalida :

Ok, Dr. Since you touched on the shift in mindset, what major changes have you observed recently regarding women opportunities in the academic field in particular?

As you can see, women remain a minority in ministries. And despite proving their competence, they are always encountered with rejection of being included in critical positions. Until now, not a single Palestinian woman has been given the chance to work in one of the major ministries in the country such as Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs.

We have conducted a study regarding female graduates in Palestine and concluded that there are at least 6 majors which provide less opportunities to females in comparison with males due to a deeply rooted culture that believes women could only give less than men do.

For example, when it comes to IT, the majority of people believe that it requires time, thinking and effort. Therefore, women were not given proper chances in the field. When we called in female IT graduates and provided them with extensive up-to-date training to prepare them for labour market, we have found that IT companies hired those females who have proven to be more qualified than many men. The stereotypical image of women that they are inferior in their abilities has proven to be false in light of trials. Therefore, the stereotypical image against women is difficult to change unless we delve into real experiences. The IT experience of well-trained female graduates resulted in all of them being hired except for one who didn't because she got married abroad. The rest have proven to be worthy of the jobs.

The issue with the stereotypical image rises from the public notion that women are only capable in certain areas while incapable in others requiring thinking or field work where women often get ruled out unless they actively prove themselves.

Several studies we have conducted have also shown discrimination against women in salaries, especially in private institutions. As governmental sectors consist of unified staffs, private sectors usually grant men higher salaries than women. Not all private institutions consider men to be entitled of higher wages but unfortunately, many private institutions still believe men should be paid better. This certainly indicates several issues in this regard and that's why several women organizations exist.

Khalida:

Ok,Dr. Although many women now have access to education and job opportunities, do you think that females still face other problems? Meaning the social phenomenon related to women being vulnerable to physical, verbal, psychological and other forms of violence. Despite that women now have greater opportunities for education and work.

Dr. Sama:

This culture that discriminates women is growing and is being nourished by several obscurantist forces which aim to rule out women from participating in the struggle or work.

This can be referred to about 50% of the Palestinian society being females, and 60% children. 40% whom are not children leaves only 20% adult men in the Palestinian society. Can this 20% population lead and support the remaining 80% of the society? Could they participate in social, cultural and political development?

Ruling women out is a deliberate act by hostile parties which aim at toppling the Palestinian community and feeding off their potentials in resisting the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state. That said, I do not consider this cause to be marginal or of low impact. Although a variety of people keep using the religious argument simply for putting on an Abaya and growing out their beards, delving into the history of Islam only proves their argument to be false as women have positioned great leading roles for ages. The matter of stereotyping women is merely politic which targets the toppling of the Palestinian community such as other Arab communities. That's why we must not give in to these attempts.

Khalida:

These incidents you mentioned, Dr., represent our daily life issues when dealing with women. In your opinion, what are the most principal violations committed against women's rights or violations you believe women suffer from in our society?

Dr. Sama:

One of the most striking violations against women is depriving them the freedom of choice regarding their future, their being and this is the most critical violation. Secondly, practices of violence against women. Not only beatings, but also psychological violence such as neutralizing of women of causes they desire to be part of. Disrespect of women and denying them the proper opportunities they aspire is considered in my opinion one of the major violations against women, in addition to daily records of physical violence to the point of being killed.

Legal violence can be reflected through the Jordanian Penal Code which allows the killing of women known as honor killings where women get killed for moral reasons. Amendments to the article have never been approved. Failure to pass a law to protect families from violence is a form of legal injustice against women as well. Despite the Palestinian authority signing conventions which promote eliminating all forms of discrimination against women such as the CEDAW Convention, no amendments have been enacted so as to incorporate the Convention into domestic law. This legal violence impacts all aspects of life.

Let's not forget economic violence we discussed earlier which denies women sufficient job opportunities. Despite the fact that some women work in the same jobs as men, and for similar working hours, men still get paid better than women since institutions believe they do these women a favor by simply hiring them. Therefore, they believe there is no need for them to receive sufficient wages which is a clear exploitation of women. We

have legal, physical and most importantly psychological violence practiced against women in our society.

Khalida:

Since we have spoken of the most prominent aspects regarding women in our Palestinian society, do you believe that women's lives are endangered in our society?

Dr. Sama:

It really depends what danger we are discussing here. If we are discussing physical harm, then yes. Several females in our society suffer this problem. Working in women organizations, we always receive complaints from a huge number of women who suffer violence by their fathers or brothers. Not only physical violence but also financial. For example, religious guidelines guarantee women's rights in inheritance. However, many brothers dictate the females' inheritance and prevent them from receiving their shares which harms those females financially. This indicates women are supposed to have a passive role when it comes to their decisions in all cases. As for legal violence I mentioned earlier, we suffer a great deal by laws which discriminate women. In sharia courts, arbitrary divorce is very common where it takes women years to prove harm practiced against them.

The apparent discrimination of women causes harm to women and puts their interests at risk. Being unable to obtain their inheritance or get a job puts women in financial dilemmas and forces them to be passive in every other aspect of their lives. Like I said, today we are struggling for approval of the Domestic Violence Protection Act. Yet, we are faced with opposing opinions which practically threaten women that even law won't protect you from violence which you should always be vulnerable to.

The society usually tolerates violence cases and regards them socially acceptable and as a right for men to discipline women.

Several legal articles endanger women's lives and promote violations against them to be socially and legally accepted. Not a year passes without records of women being murdered in 'honor killings' where women usually get framed to cover for inheritance causes. A study has been conducted in Jordan years ago concluded that several women have been killed in 'honor killings' while the main reason behind their murder had been inheritance. This indicates how powerless women truly are in this community especially with the absence of a protective law or tribe as in the case with men. Yes, women are constantly in danger.

Emad Farrajeen Interview 28-8-2022

As for your question I believe satirical comedy speaks loudly for societies as it sheds light on important matters

for communities. Those matters people always struggle with on their daily lives yet fail to express. Here's where satirical comedy sheds light on subjects through laughter and comedy by initiating controversy leading to broader discussions.

When it comes to women, women have always been a focus of attention in Watan Ala Watar through causes of 'honor killings', early marriage and murders against women. In one of the episodes we have discussed women's killings and how tribal customs decide on these crimes instead of law. Tribal customs usually bring up inheritance issues and honor. Therefore, Watan Ala Watar is one of the productions that have fiercely defended women's rights.

The Arab communities are known to be ideal and would despise for anything to harm their reputation. Yet, a variety of factors prove this common belief to be false. Only God is perfect. However, human beings hide several causes whether we refuse to speak of, or feel ashamed of.

Satirical comedy in the Arab communities is still in need of more time due to Arab communities being conservative and tribal based. Customs and traditions often lead to misunderstandings of messages and morals and in some cases to receive absolutely the opposite messages.

Satirical comedy is truly controversial since it involves the viewer, a family member, a neighbor or a certain behavior. It goes beyond regular forms of art. Therefore, it is considered to be of difficulty and complexity especially in the Arab communities.

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When we show a husband hitting his wife on an episode, the main purpose is never to encourage such behavior, but rather to shed light on such a reality. A variety of men treat their women with disrespect and undervalue them as if they were their servants. Bringing these scenes on the show raises them to the surface as we aim to show men how they actually treat women. The phenomenon is widespread in our Arab communities and that's why we shed light on this aspect so as to allow men to see their true image they can't see.

Interview with Dr.Samar AlShinnar 26-7-2022

Dr. Samar:

I am Samar AlShinnar, I have taught communication and public relations at Al Najah University for over 35 years. I have PHD in public relations in addition to research papers related to communication and public relations. Areas of interest include women's rights, human rights, photojournalism, scientific research in addition to a variety of matters. I am married and I have 3 children. The youngest has MA in international relations. The eldest is my daughter Raya who has PHD in Health Facilities Administration. I have worked with a variety of institutions for women's affairs in Nablus. Since my graduation back in 1982, I have served as a board member for several women's associations and non-profit organizations in the city.

Khalida:

All the best to you, Dr. Now, of course since the discussion revolves around women's stereotyping in the region and in the Middle East in particular. As we are discussing the topic in Palestine, and as an experienced academic in the field of teaching, how do you perceive the overview of women in the Palestinian society?

Dr. Samar:

Generally speaking, the current overview of women is one of appreciation and respect, except for some cases that have appeared or have surfaced to oppose this phenomenon. There have been anomalies that have sometimes occurred. It does not match our Palestinian traditions or our Palestinian reality. A woman is a man's friend and companion, and she is patient in all circumstances. She must be the decision-maker, because she has endured all the suffering. Among women are female prisoners, among them are female martyrs and female academics. And I want to emphasize the academic aspect. Back in the day, I remember a student about 20 years ago telling me: 'If you would supervise us in this

course, I would not register for it because I hate women.' I responded: 'You are free to register or not. I am here, I was educated here and my family has sent me abroad to study. I have the educational qualifications with which I can lead this ship. So, for me, you have the right to reject or accept to be one of the students I teach.' Later, I met that young man again and he apologized to me and told me that he had made a mistake in his decisions because he came from a family that hated women and did not appreciate them and treated them badly. Then he expressed how he had all respect and appreciation towards me.

That incident I have faced myself sums up the stereotypical image of women. Although some harassments still resurface due to the reactionary opinions of that male which he assumes entitles him to treat females inferiorly within this academic institution, these cases are often tackled with so as to teach these individuals that that way of treating an academic person with a degree is completely improper and that it is absolutely inappropriate to treat a colleague in such an inhumane matter.

This has always been a relative matter. Since the beginning of my career in education, difficulties have been great. However, we were able to devote ourselves and create a new reality despite the harassments which we could reduce through education, scientific research and daily dialogue. We must not give up because these molds forced upon us must be changed and broken through daily practices, patience, and dedication of modern cultural reality. Nothing is impossible, and women can fight battles with new generations through their cultural depth and daily interaction, lectures and discussions with students.

I remember one student telling me : ' We have hit rock bottom the moment Palestinian women headed to work.' I asked : 'Why do you think that? Who is behind this notion?'

He said, "I see that when some women go to work , it causes their families to fall apart." I asked him to give me an example. He responded that their neighbor is a teacher who goes to work leaving her children unattended with no one to look after them. I said to him: "Do you think that if she stayed home, there would be someone

who could afford her children?" He said: 'No. Her husband spends most of his time in the café enjoying hookah and hanging out with friends, while she works for a salary to spend on her children and herself.' I responded: 'Now you have the answer regarding that woman's motive to go to work due to default by her partner since a woman could never choose to tear her family apart.' I also gave him an example which is my family whom I consider successful, my children being university graduates and myself contributing to the social, economic and cultural development of the family. A few cases we encounter should not necessarily shape the whole stereotypical image of women in a community. For instance, we have Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Dean of the Department of Arts at Birzeit University and the press secretary for the Palestinian negotiating delegation in the Washington negotiations. We have Dr. Laila Ghannam, Governor of Ramallah and al-Bireh, one of the best feminist figures whose humane treatment and aid of society is second to none.

There are many cases which contribute to positively shaping new stereotypical molds that we must not lose sight of and for that we should not despair. My message is we should proceed and launch interactive social dialogue to participate together with men as not to lose hope. To have sort of workshops and friendships. Why friendships? Because the mistake made by Palestinian women in the previous feminist movement was that some directed to educate women were not positively implemented in terms of methods and approaches adopted with the aim of leading women towards realizing and gaining their rights. We must engage in this debate in a way that could induce women to realize that man is their friend not their enemy. In addition, we should attract male supporters of women to push relevant authorities to break molds against women and combat stereotypes of women being more suitable for certain jobs than others.

Khalida :

Ok, Dr. Since you touched on the shift in mindset, what major changes have you observed recently regarding women opportunities in the academic field in particular?

Dr. Samar:

Academically, there is no doubt that a large number of women were recently able to achieve high degrees such as masters and PhDs and travel abroad for such qualifications. Women also occupy prestigious positions in academic institutions such as An-Najah National University. At the moment, there are three female deans within the recent crew: The dean of scientific research, vice president of e-learning affairs and the dean of arts, Ms. Rawaa Al-Ramahi, for instance.

In the past, there was only one dean, but now the number of female academics with high academic qualifications is on the rise due to families starting to let go of the negative marginal overview of women whom are assumed to behave badly if they travel. There are many women who have proven themselves in working for the government, academic and civil organizations.

I perceive a positive gradual change despite the fact that it may account for 1% of the whole community, yet it is considered positive and will hopefully lead to change the stereotypical image in general. I think we have a long way to go and patience so as to change this typical image of women who has been carved in the minds of people

for ages. Nothing comes easy.

Khalida:

Ok,Dr. Although many women now have access to education and job opportunities, do you think that females still face other problems? Meaning the social phenomenon related to women being vulnerable to physical, verbal, psychological and other forms of violence. Despite that women now have greater opportunities for education and work.

Dr.Samar:

I don't want to mention stories except for incidents from Palestinian reality which indicates that many women who have assumed high positions and obtained college degrees still suffer a variety of challenges and issues. For example, the husbands of women who have won positions in village and municipal councils usually attend meetings on behalf of their wives and sign meetings' records for their wives, especially when those meeting take place during night time as it's socially unacceptable that women go out at night or spend the night away from home which usually makes women looked down upon. As far as I am aware, there are several cases where men attend meetings instead of their wives and sign for them which in my opinion makes women appear inferior to men as if she had no power of will. She is similar to a puppet whom gets positioned as others wish.

This is an indication of having no trust in women despite the fact that they have been elected by people's free will, yet we still witness the inferiority against women. Although many women have assumed high positions, they are still unable to travel alone unless they had their husbands, brothers or sons as companions in travel, meaning a variety of challenges facing women.

Another incident occurred as I was heading to the municipal library to get a library membership. I was astonished when the librarian requested that I should have had a male retainer or sponsor despite that the fact that he was well aware that I was well-educated and worked at a high education institution. Imagine if I had accepted his request! I told him that I lost interest in that membership card and that I would not call for my husband or anybody else to sponsor me since I didn't consider that I lacked anything mentally, spiritually or morally and that I was entitled to that membership card just like everybody else. Later, I kept struggling for that law to be dropped. I headed to Nablus Municipality and confronted them to drop that shameful law and that such a silly behavior shouldn't be tolerated.

One day, I had arrived at the municipality office to pay our Water and power bills while my husband was in prison. The employee asked: 'Why are you here to pay the bills?' I simply responded: 'Why shouldn't I come?' He replied: 'it's better if your husband or brother came to do it.' I asked him: 'Do you know where my husband is?' He responded with a no. I said: 'He is in prison. So, who will come to pay the bills? It is no shame to come and pay the bills and I am enough.' I have been through several situations when would go to get things while my husband was in prison when people would ask me: 'Why is it you carrying your grocery? You are a lady, you should stay at home.' I would smile and laugh at their backward way of thinking. I kept going out and I still do

the shopping and pay the bills as a form of resistance in the face of this way of treating women.

Khalida:

These incidents you mentioned, Dr., represent our daily life issues when dealing with women. In your opinion, what are the most principal violations committed against women's rights or violations you believe women suffer from in our society?

Dr.Samar:

Women are legally and rightfully entitled to their salaries, fortune and inheritance. A male should never dictate her money or fortune. Many co-workers tell me that on their paydays, their husbands take over the money and only give them a little pocket money for the road as a form of control. This is a form of human rights violations. Another example is when a husband requests that his wife cedes her land which she inherited from her father or family to her husband so he controls it as he wishes. There are several violations against Palestinian women performed by their husbands or brothers such as being disinherited. I know of many sisters who have given up their inheritance to their brothers just as to keep a good relationship with them. Despite the fact that these women are well-educated and that males usually inherit double the portion a female does, women willingly give up their rights just to keep good relations with their brothers. Several Palestinian women rights are unappreciated.

Khalida:

Since we have spoken of the most prominent aspects regarding women in our Palestinian society, do you believe that women's lives are endangered in our society?

Dr. Samar:

Let me tell you that women in general are endangered. Meaning there are no laws to protect women from danger. There has to be a legal system to ensure women's rights because no matter how well- educated we are, or how high our positions in society get, there has to be actual deterrent penalties against those who violate women's rights whether she is a president or a common, a woman remains endangered either way.

Therefore, I believe that to protect society's peace and maintain social fabric, a society has to emphasize security for women in general, and Palestinian women in particular as they also face violations by the Israeli occupation which only doubles violations committed against women by their own surroundings and occupation. A woman suffers huge pressure which definitely tackles her productivity and creativity and puts her in a constant state of stress. The stereotypical image of women must be fought through a legal system which constitutes a rampart against a volley of violations against them such as murder, honor killings, rape and incest we often hear of in our community. Hopefully, competent authorities, women's organizations and civil society organizations cooperate to provide solid outcomes to protect women and provide safety. Is a woman who is unsecure capable of creativity? Inventions? Innovations? Certainly not. Despite that there are some women who are creative, these creative women are vulnerable to violence at any given moment.

Nuha Ziadah Interview 18-8-2022

Khalida: Please introduce yourself.

Nuha: I currently work as an executive secretary in the National Public Commission for Women's Affairs in Jordan. This commission follows up women's conditions at the national level. Meaning women's empowerment and supporting their rights since women consist half the society.

Khalida: Do you consider that you have enforced an impact at the political level of the Jordanian government?

Nuha: Our national strategies differ from other countries. We are based as an independent committee with a separate budget. On the contrary, Palestine has Women's Ministry and Egypt for example has a National Council which are considered official entities whereas we work in private sector. Our mission is to ensure that all government institutions take women and their needs in consideration.

Khalida: Which additional issues facing women have evolved recently in Jordan?

Nuha: Women are now vulnerable to violent acts due to lack of independence. For instance, women offer their services free of charge to their husbands and everyone around them. Yet, men do not. I believe the issue rises from legislations regarding divorce and disagreements. The way the community treats women suffers a serious undervalue and our main issue is with our customs.

Khalida: What recent changes have been made that had an impact on the status of women?

Nuha: The issue of women's rights is an educational issue for society as a whole. Unfortunately, women being half the society remain a non-functioning layer. They are viewed as a burden and not a partner. Therefore, development must be sustainable and comprehensive. Do you know that the motto of our committee is "Do not humiliate us!"?

In addition, women still struggle to hold positions in the country. To illustrate, although women consist 48% of the Jordanian society, only 11% are represented in the Jordanian Parliament. Education has definitely bridged the gap between men and women. However, jobs and majors post high school are still categorized for women based on the caretaker roles of women. There are still various jobs and majors that appeal to women who have families to attend to. Meaning, women are limited to certain type of professions. Bringing up any sort of structural change related to a large society group such as women will not have a mass effect unless included within a total of alternations and efforts made. Women are a priority and their issues are no less significant than issues of poverty for example.

Khalida: What are the principal violations committed against women within the Jordanian society?

Nuha: Human rights must be appreciated and respected and human dignity must be preserved. The root of the

issue is an integral part of human rights. Violations against women vary but the most striking is violence such as physical violence or sexual harassment which could lead to killing crimes. Women are restricted by laws which often favor men. This striking systematic philosophy is completely unacceptable but unfortunately a part of our culture and customs. Other forms of violent violations in my opinion are denying women the opportunity to pursue their education or work. These rights are unfortunately connected to fathers and brothers consent and can only be achieved with their approval if they perceive these opportunities beneficial.

Khalida: How do you perceive women's image in the TV series Watan Ala Watar?

Nuha: There are various media productions which expose communities long-established cultures. The resources needed to shape society's awareness are strictly related to media productions which discuss acquired concepts derived from curriculums and various widespread briefing materials within the community.

Tariq Hamdan Interview 3-9-2022

Khalida: How would you describe the general overview of women in the Arab communities?

Tariq: Unfortunately women's roles revolve primarily around the caretaking of families and homes. What is even more unfortunate is when young women achieve some sort of professional independence but decide to give it up when they get married or have kids. The society has assigned caretaking strictly to women whereas men brought up in a patriarchal society which assigned specific tasks for both men and women and marked women to a subordinate role. However, there are exceptions especially when it comes to specific social strata in mega cities.

Khalida: Which changes have been brought up concerning women's rights and work and education opportunities?

Tariq: Recently, women have accomplished great progress in work and education. However, this progress remains substandard. The progress has not become a reality due to women's minimum participation in the work market despite women obtaining education. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go to achieve women's rights. The majority of civil status laws support inequality between men and women and perpetuate injustice against women. These legislations vary among official laws and social restrictions which often have a greater impact on women than government laws themselves. For example, inheritance, custody of children, under-age marriage and denying women a variety of rights are all injustice practices against women. This injustice also stems from social authorities, customs and traditions. The most notable example in this case is the massive demonstration which took place in Hebron to protest against the Palestinian leadership intention to support the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) dedicated to provide protection for women and children's rights.

Khalida: Do you believe that satirical comedy and vitriol could speak for communities' causes?

Tariq: The artistic industry is an important tool for bringing up change and raising awareness about various social issues, but in the Arab region, we notice that the dominant aspect is populist commercialism which often contradicts the values of freedom, justice and human rights, and sometimes may even serve as a factor in perpetuating inequality and promoting cultural heritage and contradictory perceptions.

Criticism is one of the most important tools for initiating societal debates on the condition that it does not turn into a room for insult or undervalue the role of women or the role of any other society group.

Khalida: How do you perceive the causes of the Palestinian and Jordanian women in the TV Comedy Watan Ala Watar?

Tariq: It isn't just about Watan Ala Watar. Women in the Arab region suffer stereotypical images emphasized by a trendy TV production and commercials that have been common for decades. The common overview of women tends to undervalue them. And by monitoring commercials and how women are presented we notice that their roles are strictly connected to housework and parenting or beauty that appeals to men. I have seen some episodes of Watan Ala Watar which have been widely shared on social media platforms. The show is unfortunately consistent with the stereotypical image of women and other social groups. The reason this sort of productions is encouraged is the popular base of community which have been brought up in an environment that welcomes this stereotypical image thinking that it's normal. Instead of producing shows that criticize and oppose this image, we still come across productions that encourage it by turning it into a comedy!

Khalida: What in your opinion emphasizes that image assumed to undervalue women and how is it possible to change it?

Tariq: There is a large system in which official government agencies, media institutions and societies are an essential part of. We cannot speak of change without dismantling and reforming this system. The starting point, of course, is education, whether educational institutions whose curricula lack sexual education, or families which usually assign gender-based tasks to each family member. The media bears a great deal of responsibility and is responsible for banning material that degrades women or any other social group and avoiding neglecting any vital social issue. This type of media is unfortunately missing.

As for the official parties, they are complicit and directly involved in perpetuating gender inequality, whether via laws or the absence of effective policies that protect and support women's rights.

There remains hope, however since lately we have noticed individuals, activists, institutions and initiatives attempting to change that image.

This is very important and will have a great impact, but is it enough? I do not think so. Political will and a broad social movement in which various sectors participate are required in order to change this reality.