Liberation, patriarchal practices and women's use of violence in the domestic setting in Saudi Arabia

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Declaration

Acknowledgement

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Parents and my Husband: Thank you for all the love, support and encouragement that you have given me through-out my studies.

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ABSTRACT

Both women and men suffer from domestic violence around the world. While domestic violence against women has received considerable research attention, domestic violence against men has been under-studied, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The limited data available from the National Family Safety Registry of Saudi Arabia and the National Society for Human Rights suggest that female-perpetrated domestic violence has been increasing in Saudi Arabia. Existing studies further indicate that the Saudi women, especially those with higher levels of education, are becoming increasingly frustrated with the prevalence of the guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. This research therefore aims to understand the reasons for why women commit violence against men in Saudi Arabia and to study the role of patriarchy (guardianship, polygamy) and female emancipation (for education and employment) in the rise of the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. In so doing, the dissertation also examines the explanatory value of the existing theoretical accounts (liberation and self-defence theories). The dissertation employs a qualitative research method, using the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews conducted at the Riyadh Prison for Women (Saudi Arabia) with 30 women who were incarcerated for committing violence against their guardians. A thematic analysis is used to analyse the obtained data. It is shown that participants in this study committed their offence due to a number of reasons such as frustrations with living under the guardian system, prevention from education and employment, abuse and mistreatment, and self-defence. Furthermore, the study find that liberation theory can be used to explain some aspects of participant's use of violence, however, the term 'liberation' itself needs to be understood differently in the Saudi context.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1. **Introduction**

Humans can be violent and aggressive, and this means that women are not an exception (Maguire, 2010; Dobash and Dobash, 2014). Yet, female-perpetrated domestic violence has received only little academic attention compared to that of the male offenders (Shorey et al., 2011; Pornari et al., 2013). While some researchers question the degree of its prevalence (Hines et al., 2007; Celeste Walley-Jean and Swan, 2009), some maintain that it is eventually the women who are the victims because female offending and female victimisation go together (Celeste Walley-Jean and Swan, 2009; Liddell and Martinovic, 2013). Nevertheless, female offending is also recognised as a significant and widespread problem (Cannon, 2011). Buzawa and Carl (2017), for example, report that at least 30 men are killed each year in Germany, as a consequence of domestic violence inflicted by a female partner. George and Yarwood's (2004) research also confirms this, as 75 out of the 100 men that participated in their study were reported to have been assaulted at least once a month.

Research on domestic violence has furthermore shown that the rate of violence among men and women is similar, with both men and women being equally likely to be the instigators of domestic violence (Van Wijik, Jeanne and Bruijn, 2016). Straus, Gelles and Steinmet (2017), for example, suggests that female-perpetrated domestic violence is as common as male offending in the United States (US). Du Plat-Jones (2006) also suggests that the effects of domestic violence are the same for both male and female victims. Analysing various studies on domestic violence, Fiebert (2004) goes further to report that women have been found to be physically more aggressive and more violent than men in their relationship. This finding was also supported by other studies, e.g. Straus and Gelles (1990), Morse (1995), and Moffitt, Robins and Caspi, 2001).

Domestic abuse against men takes various forms. A study by Du Plat-Jones (2006) states that men were victims of stabbing, beating, verbal, emotional and psychological

cruelty, among others. Factors such as gender roles, norms, values and socio-cultural environment are argued to have an influence on such behaviours (Kumar, 2012).

Although domestic violence against men does occur, such incidents largely remain unreported. As Leonard (2003) notes, because men are generally reluctant to admit being a victim of abuse and seek professional help, it is difficult to establish reliable estimates of male victimisation of domestic violence. Hence, there could indeed be a larger number of male victims who have yet to or do not wish to report any abuse they faced. Dewar (2008) also refers to some cases where the male victims' reports of their abuse were ignored by the police. As a result, fewer female perpetrators of domestic violence have been arrested, charged or convicted (Dewar, 2004).

2. Female Perpetrated Domestic Violence in Saudi Arabia

According to the Ministry of Justice, Saudi Arabia, its courts saw a total of 8,016 cases of domestic violence against women in a one-year period in 2016. Majority of these cases had been reported in Riyadh, Makkah, and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. During the same period, courts also saw 8,020 cases of domestic violence against men, including physical and psychological abuse (Aldosari, 2017). As many cases of domestic violence are unreported, the actual rate of prevalence of such abuse has been difficult to measure in Saudi Arabia. It is similarly difficult to accurately measure the prevalence of domestic violence perpetrated by women against men in Saudi Arabia, as many male victims do not report such incidents. According to Lambert (n.d), men do not want to be perceived as weak and under the control of their wives. For this reason, the reported cases of domestic violence by women on men are rare, and there is a lack of information on the issue (NSHR, 2015). Male victims often turn to their wife's family to prevent or contain the behaviour, or for help with reconciliation (Lambert, n.d).

Nevertheless, in 2014, the Riyadh-based Waei Centre for Social Advice received approximately 557,000 calls from the Saudi men seeking help as victims of domestic violence at the hands of their wives. Most of these men reported the violence against them anonymously and did not submit an official complaint against their wives, as a

result of which, these cases would not have been recorded as domestic violence cases and may have impacted court proceedings; In Saudi Arabia, domestic violence cases are only treated as crimes when the victim actively reports them and presses charges (Alhabdan, 2015). In the absence of charges being pressed, the case is simply treated as a family dispute and is then subject to Family Law (Chibli Mallat, 2017). Increase in domestic violence committed against male guardians was also highlighted in the first annual report of the National Family Safety Registry of Saudi Arabia in 2011, which showed 152 substantiated cases of abuse by women on men. Additionally, the *National Society for Human Rights* (*NSHR*, 2015) shows an increase in the reported cases of violence committed by women against men from 9 to 44 between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Reported Cases of Female Perpetrated Violence in Saudi Arabia
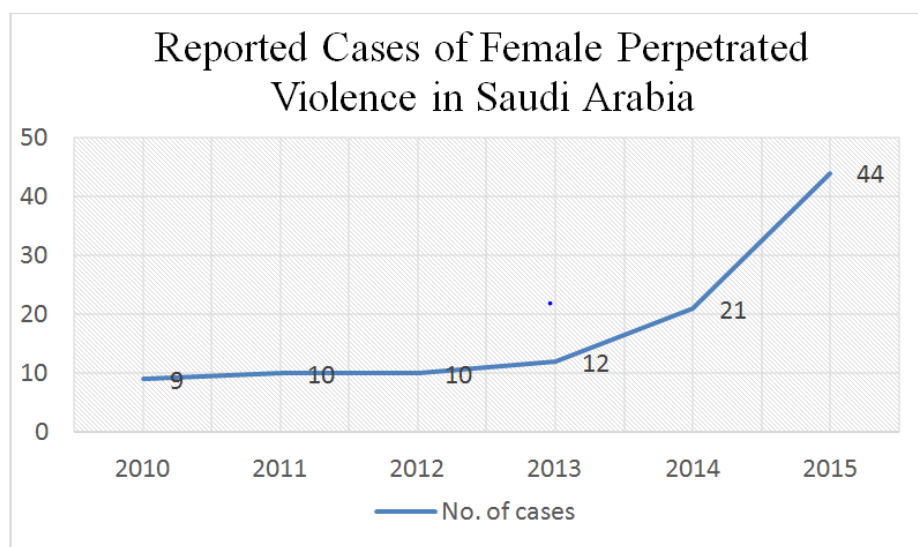
Source: NSHR, 2015

A few past studies have sought to investigate the reasons behind women's motivation for violence against men in Saudi Arabia. For example, Al-Khashab (1983), and Alquaiz (2017). Both studies suggest that self-defence was the primary reason for women committing violence against men.

In Western countries, women have been aware of their long-recognised social and economic rights (Elliot and Mandell, 1998). According to some Western writers, however, the prospect of women's emancipation has stirred in men a fear of losing

their dominant role in society; a fear that, they argue, has led to an increase in domestic violence against women; and in turn, an increase also in violence by women towards men (Williams, Holmes, 1981; Zufferey et al., 2016). Thus, it might be considered that female violence against men is rooted in their increased freedom. This is not to say that increased freedom for women is a direct cause of increased women's violence against men, however, it can have an indirect impact. Gelles (1997) suggests that violence against women by men is used as a means of expressing power and resolving male-identity crisis, mainly in cases where the traditional provider role of a man is challenged. Vyas and Watt (2009) highlight six studies that find an association between women employment and increased risk of intimate partner violence in low to middle-income countries. When faced with such violence, women can retaliate and use violence against men as a means of protection. Granted, these arguments may not be directly applicable to the Saudi society because of the social and cultural differences. However, these insights provide a useful framework to analyse female domestic violence in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and other Arab states, especially in considering the increase in women's liberation, as these countries have a very similar culture – existence of guardianship system and polygamy.

3. Defining Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a global issue, experienced in both developed and developing countries. However, it is difficult to establish a universal definition of the term, due to varying cultural and legal understandings of domestic violence. The definitions provided by various international organisations are rather broad. The United Nations for example, established the following definition of domestic violence in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993: " Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation." (Article 2(a), United Nations, 1993). Similarly, regional instruments such as the Council of Europe (2011) defined domestic violence in the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and

domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

Dobash and Dobash (2004) point out that it is important to define what constitutes domestic violence, particularly in considering whether violence is a result of self-defence. As Swan and Snow (2006) suggest, in case the definition of violence extends beyond physical aggression to include controlling behaviour and denial of women's rights, then the women who are violent towards the male family members that behave in this way may be seen to be acting in self-defence, in the same way as if they had been physically attacked. Indeed, Eriksson and Mazerolle (2013) argue that undue exercise of control by men over women is a form of violence. This undue control or controlling behaviour is also recognised as domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Act, 2015 in the UK. According to the Home Office, UK (2015), controlling behaviour can be established in a number of ways including attempts by the perpetrator to make the victim dependent, misusing the victim's resources and capacities for personal agendas, and monitoring victim's everyday behaviour (Home Office, 2015, p. 22).

Controlling behaviour is also a form of intimate partner violence (WHO, 2012). According to the World Health Organisation, intimate partner violence "refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes, physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship." (WHO, 2010, p. 1). Further discussion on various definitions of domestic violence and how these compare internationally is done in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

4. Liberation Theory

According to Dekeseredy and Dragiewicz (2011), feminism is the theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes. Liberation within the context of feminism means women's ability to make their own choices (Toprak, 1990). Liberation Theory, which appeared during the first (late 19th and early 20th century) and second waves (early 1960's) of feminism in the Western world, understands liberation not only in

terms of being able to make one's own choices but also being free from oppression on every level. Thus, Liberation Theory is linked to the first wave feminism and women's right to vote, and to the second wave feminism and achievements for women in areas such as employment, education, sexuality, and equality within the family (Newburn, 2009; Hale 2005).

Some scholars controversially argue that although the first and second wave feminist movements created opportunities for women to be liberated, they also created an environment where women engaged in criminal activities (Simon, 1975; Klein, 1973 Pollak, 1950; and Al-Abdullah, 2006). These scholars claim that the new opportunities women gained through employment and wealth have given them access not only to legitimate social spheres but to illegitimate ones as well and have increased female violence at home (Adler, 1975). Furthermore, Small (2000, p 75) argues that the rate of female criminality, for both property and violent offences, has been increasing as a result of the masculinisation process of women; as women become freer, they also become prone to integrating into their personality certain male characteristics such as aggression, pushiness, and hard-headedness and learn to resort to crime as a means of acquiring success and wealth. Others, on the other hand, argue that the total volume of female crime has increased due to the progressive emancipation of women in the society, which can be easily considered as a challenge to the patriarchal system (Pike, 1876; Adler, 1975; Klien 1973; Pollak, 1950).

Therefore, liberation theory in the context of Saudi Arabia may motivate female perpetrated violence. However, it has a slightly different character from being masculine and/or adopting male characteristics; it is more related to the resistance to the patriarchal system. Being aware of their rights, women would not want to be restricted to obtain those rights, especially, it obtaining those rights means that permission still needs to be sought from their male guardian. For example, Saudi women cannot commence employment unless they have obtained permission from their guardian, and even if this has been done, Saudi women can lose their employment if their male guardian revokes his permission. It can thus be argued in the Saudi context that pursuing the right to control their own lives and in particular, rights such as the right to an education and the right to engage in paid work create

challenges to the patriarchal system. Naturally, women who have obtained education would not simply be content if they are unable to utilise their education and obtain meaningful employment, beyond just taking on traditional role as a house wife. If these women belong to a family that prefers patriarchal gender roles, it is likely that the male guardian will deny them the permission to seek employment, and further that their family (parents in particular) will not support them either. When challenging the patriarchal system and the negative response that women receive to this challenge from their families, it may lead some women to use violence to achieve their aims or to seek retaliation when those aims are frustrated. However, it must also be considered that not all violence committed by women in Saudi Arabia would be borne out of frustrations from the patriarchal system. Therefore, it is also important to consider the possibility of women committing violence in self-defence.

5. Self-Defence Theory

According to LaFave and Scott (1972, cited in Crocker, 1985), self-defence is premised on the principle that an individual should be able to take reasonable steps to defend oneself against an unlawful attack. Moriarty (2005) also refers to the concept of anticipatory self-defence (ASD), which indicates a situation when an assaulted party engages in a violent behaviour that aims at preventing a future attack.

The theory of self-defence is useful in explaining cases where the women who committed the act of domestic violence might not have behaved so with the intention of committing harm but in self-defence. Along the same lines, Toole (2012) argues that, in many cases, the Saudi women use violence in order to protect themselves against physical assaults from their family members and husbands, which takes us back to LaFave and Scott's (1972, cited in Crocker, 1985) stated premise. However, female-perpetrated domestic violence is a much more complex phenomenon than suggested by LaFave and Scott.

The complexity of female perpetrated domestic violence lies in the context of what should be understood by 'violence'. Clearly, a woman defending herself from the physical attacks of her husband or a family member can be construed as acting in self-defence. However, it is difficult to consider a violent action in response to the denial

of one's basic rights as self-defence unless such a denial is included within the definition of violence. Thus, the question of self-defence is not straightforward, and is based on the meaning attributed to the prior attack and/or violence against women. However, there is strong support for the idea that the male guardianship system is so controlling and abusive that it does amount to domestic violence (Tønnessen, 2016). Similar assertion can be made also with regard to the practice of polygamy. Indeed, Human Rights Watch (2008) records these practices as causing real harm and suffering to the Saudi women, both physically and mentally.

One might therefore ask why the women that are subjected to such abusive controls and physical violence do not report to the police. This is because the male guardianship system creates a cruel 'catch 22' situation for women; guardianship dictates that all decisions and actions concerning women are to be made by a woman's guardian. Thus, in case a woman wants to report to the police the mistreatment she faced, her guardian must accompany her. The police will not consider her appeal unless in the presence of her guardian. Where the guardian himself is the perpetrator; however, the woman is placed in a cruel and impossible position. That is why the vicious circle created by the patriarchal guardianship system is regarded not only as abusive, but a form of state-supported violence towards women (see Tønnessen, 2016).

6. Aims, Method and Respondents

Against this background, the present study aims to understand the causes of female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia female perpetrated domestic violence occurs in a very different context compared to the West, for it is a highly patriarchal society. Therefore, the present study does not only aim to examine the explanatory value of the existing theoretical explanations that are mostly applicable to the Western societies. It is also the objective of this study to identify various cultural-specific constraints in Saudi Arabia in order to better understand the factors for the rise of female perpetrated violence in the country. As the cultural practices of guardianship and polygamy are the pillars of the patriarchy in Saudi

Arabia(Tønnessen, 2016),the present study will mainly focus on these two factors, among others. .

The practice of guardianship requires that every Saudi woman must have a male guardian, typically a father or husband, but it may be her brother, grandfather, father's brother or her son. The guardian is responsible for making a range of important decisions on the woman's behalf. The extent of this practice is such that, generally, adult women cannot work, travel, study or marry without permission from their guardian (Al Hussein, 2014). The imposition and perpetuation of the practice is justified by a strict interpretation of the Quran and reflects conservative religious fears surrounding perceived consequences of freedom for women (Jawad, 1998).

As noted by Watch (2008), the guardianship system is a significant impediment to the realisation of women's rights in Saudi Arabia and women's value as members of the society. However, as Hamdan (2005) and Deif (2008) argue, educated Saudi women are becoming more aware of their rights and have begun to challenge the practice of guardianship. It is even argued that women's lack of basic rights such as the right to education and employment lead them to commit acts of domestic violence against their guardians.

Polygamy – the practice of a man taking more than one wife – is considered by many Saudi men and women to be a right granted by the Sharia. As such, it amounts to a divine right bestowed upon men. Nevertheless, for many Saudi women, polygamy exacerbates the already negative consequences of patriarchal control over women, and they regard polygamy as a form of abuse (Al Khateeb, 2007; Yamani, 2008). Accordingly, resistance to the practices of guardianship and polygamy is growing thanks to increasing opportunities in education and employment (Human Rights Watch, 2008), and more and more Saudi women are pursuing an education and engaging in paid work today (Shiraz, 2016).

Some go further to consider Saudi women's access to education and employment already a reflection of their increasing emancipation. Jerichow (2005: 245) points out that, "the situation of Saudi women has changed drastically since the opening of the first girls' school in 1960". The percentage of the Saudi women who receive an

education rose from around 76 percent in 2004 to more than 90 percent in 2013. Despite the cultural and social restrictions generated by the guardianship system, the traditional roles of the Saudi women, for many women at least, have been extended to include membership of intellectual spheres of the Saudi society (Bobonis, Castro and González-Brenes, 2009). The number of female students in higher education has risen steadily. Most of the 24 public universities in Saudi Arabia now accept female students. Women are also allowed to study abroad, reflecting a significant improvement in the educational opportunities for the Saudi women (Al Alhareth, 2015). This leads Abdulla (2007) to draw an optimistic picture of a future generation of young Saudi women with a fierce appetite for freedom, equality and self-determination that are able to resist traditional patriarchal beliefs and practices in the country.

The growth of women's education may prove to be, as Johnson (2005) suggests, one of the strongest challenges to the patriarchy in Saudi Arabia. Education has enabled many Saudi women to negotiate different power relations within their families (Doumato, 2000). As a consequence, the percentage of the Saudi women in the labour force is increasing. A survey conducted by the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information, for example, shows a 48 percent increase in the number of women employed since 2010 (Nereim and Abu-Nasr, 2015). Johnson (2015) states that sexual segregation in the state poses a significant obstacle to increasing employment opportunities for women, since not being allowed to mix with men precludes the inclusion of women in a wide range of economic activities. She adds that employers cannot afford the costs of providing separate premises and facilities. However, in many cases, the personal reality for Saudi women is that they are restricted or prevented from engaging in employment by their husbands or guardians (Johnson, 2015).

Given the apparent tension between the prevalent patriarchal practices and Saudi women's desire for emancipation, it is curious whether the frustration and anger generated by this tension is related to their resort to violence with a motive to defend their rights. Against this background, the present study has two main objectives: (1) To understand the relationship between patriarchy (guardianship, polygamy), female

emancipation (education and employment), and female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia; (2) To examine the explanatory value of the existing theoretical accounts (theories of liberation and self-defence) regarding the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the study is built on three main research questions:

- What motivates women to commit acts of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia?

- What are the roles of patriarchal constraints, emancipatory longings and self-defence in driving such acts of violence?

- To what extent do theories of liberation and self-defence explain the motives of domestic violence perpetrated by females in Saudi Arabia?

This study pursues a qualitative approach to explore the research questions and utilises semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection.

The participants in this study are female offenders incarcerated in a Saudi Arabian prison facility as a consequence of convictions for domestic violence against men. As mentioned earlier, the objective of this research is to understand the motivations and experiences of women that have been convicted of domestic violence offences against men (guardians). In order to obtain such experience, it was therefore important to speak with women who had been imprisoned for such offences. Using the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher drew an interview framework beforehand, and used this during the data collection process to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions. Still, semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for the researcher to ask some additional questions emerging during the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Additionally, given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the vulnerability of the participants, trust was essential (Bryman, 2012); and semi-structured interviews allowed for greater rapport building between the researcher and participants.

The purposive sampling method was used to reach 30 participants from a total of 150 convicted females who committed domestic violence against their male partners/guardians. The semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted at

the Riyadh Prison for Women (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) during October-December 2014. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to specifically investigate women who were convicted of domestic violence against their guardians, and who had struggled with polygamy and the guardianship system.

This research follows the thematic analysis method to provide a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and complex account of data (Braun and Clarke 2006: 78).

All the data obtained by the interviews were coded by using NVIVO 10 software, and the interviews were transcribed by using the coding method. All the questions were transcribed as headings, which were also used as the codes. In total 119 initial codes were established. These codes were then accumulated to formulate a shorter list of 25 categories that were then further reviewed by the researcher. During the coding process, both auto and manual coding methods were used, and following the careful reading of the codes, the first set of themes for thematic analysis were created.

7. Summary of Contribution

This research makes contributions in the area of female perpetrated domestic violence, especially within the context of Saudi Arabia. It adds to our understanding of women's use of violence in light of liberation and self-defence theories, the impact of education on Saudi women's attitude towards prevalent patriarchal practices in Saudi Arabia (guardianship and polygamy), and the impact of women's desire for emancipation on women's use of violence in the domestic setting in Saudi Arabia.

8. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 provides a contextual background for the research to follow. Specifically, this chapter presents an overview of the patriarchal system, with particular emphasis on the practices of guardianship and polygamy, prevalent in Saudi Arabia. The chapter also discusses the social and political rights of women in Saudi Arabia, their expected societal roles, as well as the state of women's education and employment.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the related literature on domestic violence in general, and on female perpetrated domestic violence in particular. The chapter reviews various definitions of domestic violence and shows the state of female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia with the help of detailed statistical data. The chapter then turns to discuss the reasons behind the female-perpetrated violence against men in Saudi Arabia, considering both general and country-specific factors. Lastly, the chapter discusses the two main theories that can help understand the motives behind the female violence against men: Adler's liberation theory and the self-defence theory of female criminality.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology employed in the research. The chapter starts by reiterating the research questions and the aims of the research and continues with presenting the research design and the methodology employed. It then describes the research philosophy, the data collection method, the sampling procedures, development of the interview questions, the procedure for undertaking the interviews, and finally the data analysis method in further detail. The chapter also outlines the main characteristics of the research participants.

Chapter 5 presents the main findings of the research. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the findings pertaining to the reasons highlighted by the participants for committing violence against their guardians. The second section consists of the findings regarding how these participants committed the acts of violence. And, the last section of this chapter presents the findings on what the participants felt after having committed the offence.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 provide an analysis and discussion of the research findings in relation to the main research questions. Chapter 6 consists of an analysis of the role of patriarchal practices, emancipatory longings and self-defence in motivating women to commit acts of violence against their guardians. This chapter also compares the experiences of the educated participants with those of the uneducated ones. Chapter 7, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with assessing and examining the extent to which liberation and self-defence theories can be used to explain female perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

The last chapter, Chapter 8, is the conclusion chapter, and provides a summary of the research findings, discusses the contribution and implications of the study, and makes suggestions for future research, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia.

<center>**CHAPTER 2 – WOMEN IN SAUDI PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY**</center>

1. Introduction

In order to understand the motives of the Saudi women for committing acts of violence against men, it is important to understand the social and the legal context of Saudi Arabia in general. This chapter, therefore, provides an overview of the patriarchal challenges faced by women in Saudi Arabia. After giving brief background information about Saudi Arabia and its legal structure (section 2), this chapter will examine the status of women in the Saudi patriarchal society. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides an overview of the Saudi patriarchal society and discusses the two main patriarchal practices prevalent in Saudi Arabia: Male Guardianship and Polygamy (section 3). The second section deals with the impact of patriarchal values on women's education and employment opportunities, as well as the impact of the changing social landscape on the Saudi women, with a particular focus on women's liberation (section 4).

2. Saudi Arabia – An Overview

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdul Rahman Al Saud and covers an area of 900,000 square miles (Worldmark Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2017). Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil exporter and a key player within the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The Kingdom has a population of around 33.1 million as of 2015 (SAMA, 2016), consisting of both Saudi and non-Saudi nationals. Saudis account for 68.1 percent of the population (21.1 million)—50.2 of which are percent males and 48.2 percent of which are females. The official language of the Kingdom is Arabic; however, English is also widely spoken as a result of the Kingdom's foreign population (Worldmark Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2017). The official religion of the country is Islam. Nevertheless, due to the diversity of the population in the Kingdom, Hinduism and Christianity are also practiced (Worldmark Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2017).

2.1.   Islamic Law - *Shariah*

Islam is the official religion in the Kingdom and it stands at the heart of the Saudi society. It penetrates all aspects of life in the country, including the laws. Islamic Law is referred to as *Shariah*, and the implementation of Islamic Law is deemed very important in Saudi Arabia. In 1992, Saudi Arabia enacted its Basic Law, a pseudo constitution that specifies the powers and duties of the State and the rights of the individual. The Basic Law itself is based on the principles of Islamic Law.

Islamic Law, or *Shariah*, is derived from four main sources; The Quran, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (his words and actions), *Ijma* and *Qiyas*. The Quran is the Holy Book for Muslims, and it is considered as the "book containing the speech of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in Arabic and transmitted through a process known as *tawatur",* or continuous testimony (Al-Salami, 1999: p12.). In Islamic Law, rules explicitly mentioned in the Quran are considered the highest form of authority in the legal system (Algamidi, 20002). Though the Quran contains general principles and rules, the explanation of these rules is contained in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (Peach be upon him). Therefore, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is considered the second highest form of authority in the Islamic legal system. *Sunnah* consists of the words, actions and behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) towards his companions, and his way of life (Algamidi, 20002)*.* Therefore, *Sunnah* plays an important role in helping understand and interpret the principles and rules set out by the Quran (Algamidi, 2002). The third source of Islamic Law is *Ijma,* which can be defined as a general consensus among scholars during a particular era, regarding a legal ruling pertaining to a specific situation (Bhala, 2011). *Ijma* is an important source of Islamic Law when the Quran and the *Sunnah* are silent on certain matters. One of the reasons for using *Ijma* as a source of Islamic Law is to allow Islamic Law to evolve and adapt to the needs of changing social needs (Bhala, 2011; p 49). The fourth and the final source of Islamic Law is *Qiyas* and is defined as an analogy that is used to establish a law concerning an incident based on clear injunctions issued about a previous incident, so long as the two incidents share the same effective cause (Al-Salami, 1999). Hence, Islamic Law does allow room for interpretation and establishing new meaning.

In Saudi Arabia, the Quran and *Sunnah* are used as the primary source to derive Islamic Law. The Council of Senior *Ulema* (Scholars) can deliver *fatwas* (religious opinion and ruling) by strictly following only the Quran and *Sunnah*. Any secondary legislation created in the Kingdom, therefore, has to follow and not contradict the principles laid out by the Quran and *Sunnah* (Deif, 2008). It must be noted that among many Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia is the sole Muslim country that professes to base its legal system on *Shariah,* meaning that all laws and decrees in Saudi Arabia are formulated so as to be in line with Islamic Law.

It is a well-known fact among Muslim countries that Saudi Arabia often applies a very strict and narrow interpretation of the Islamic Law. Such interpretations of the Islamic Law are rooted in that Saudi Arabia follows the *Hanbali* School of Islamic jurisprudence. Among the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the *Hanbali* School is considered to be strict in its interpretation of the Quran and *Sunnah*. Strict in this context means a literal reading of the sacred text in a manner that does not allow for context and reasoning behind the revelation of a particular verse to be considered. Due to the strict nature of this school of thought, a number of puritanical movements have been inspired by its teachings, and in Saudi Arabia, none have been more influential than a movement called *Wahhabism* (Baderin, 2003).

The political system of the Saudi Arabian state is monarchy, a form of government in which supreme authority is vested upon a monarch, who attains his power through heredity (Al-Rodiman, 2015). The monarch can issue royal decrees that can become laws. However, the judges in courts do not have to consider these decrees and are relatively free to interpret and derive rules from the Quran and *Sunnah* for guidance in trials which results in an extensive legal inconsistency (Baderin, 2003:37-38)

Saudi Arabia's heavy reliance on Islamic Law has meant that the Saudi Government has not introduced a codified legal framework in many areas of law. As a result, the interpretation of Islamic Law has prevailed as the dominant legal framework, and this has left Islamic Law being interpreted in a way to suit and embed patriarchal values of the Saudi society. As mentioned previously, Basic Law was introduced in 1992 following some dissatisfaction against the Monarchy for failing to guarantee the basic

rights and freedoms of the citizens of Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the Basic Law essentially served to strengthen monarchy in Saudi Arabia, as democracy was argued to be against the principles of Islamic Law (Jung, 2004). Furthermore, it did not introduce any provisions for gender equality, particularly in matters of family law and it has failed to include any changes in the practices of guardianship and polygamy. Due to this it is the women who stand to lose most (Hamdan, 2005; Al Rodiman, 2015).

Although Saudi Arabia has been ruled by monarchy for many years, the country has also been affected by the political developments of the region, especially by the Arab Spring. Current political tension in the region has created political awareness within the country. However, as the Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) 2016 report states, although political dissidence had increased in parallel with the Arab uprisings of 2011, it was later controlled as a result of both regime patronage and repression. However, this repression could not prevent the rise of political awareness in different platforms; and it continues to grow with the spread of social media—though organised political opposition to the Al Saud family still remains limited. Nevertheless, the same report also states that the ruling Al Saud is acutely aware of the potential for dissent in the country and has paid close attention to uprisings in other countries in the region. Many of the demographic factors that contributed to Arab uprisings elsewhere are also present in Saudi Arabia. These include a young population (60% of Saudis are under the age of 21), persistent unemployment and underemployment (with a labour force participation ratio of below 40%), widespread dissatisfaction with inequality, uneven access to state resources and severe limitations on free speech (BTI, 2016).Discussions around increasing women's freedom and mobility through education and work were perceived from the very beginning by the religious groups as dangerous "Western ideas" (Arebi, 1994 and Hamdan, 2005).

3. The Patriarchal System in Saudi Arabia

Like many other countries in the world, Saudi Arabian society is characterised by a classic patriarchal ideology that is based on religion, tradition and culture (Kandiyoti, 1988). Often, the term patriarchy is used to describe male dominance (Kandiyoti,

1988). Nonetheless, the argument for patriarchy is often made on the unfair grounds that women are not equal to men (Engineer, 1992). This notion has been embedded in and practiced by the Saudi society. This section, therefore, provides an overview of the Saudi Arabian patriarchal society, and discusses guardianship and polygamy as two prevalent forms of patriarchy in Saudi Arabia.

3.1. Sources of Patriarchal Elements in Saudi Arabia

Patriarchal norms persist in the Saudi society to such an extent that women are controlled by men from birth to death, and largely excluded from the public sphere. Saudi women have been repeatedly labelled as homemakers, irrespective of their educational backgrounds, qualifications and achievements (Alsuwaida, 2016). Even in the professional world, the interests of women are hardly accommodated, as women are largely restricted to take on roles such as teaching and social work (Al Rawaf and Simmons, 1991).

Women's under-representation within the Saudi public sphere has been aggravated by the absence of a legitimate venue through which women's demands can be addressed. It is posited by the Saudi Authorities that Islamic Law is incompatible with democracy; and as a result, there have been no elections of political parties but monarchy in Saudi Arabia (Alsuwaida, 2016). Without democratic politics, there has been limited space for communication and collaboration, and hence no sense of political community (Alsuwaida, 2016). Thus, it has been extremely difficult to bring serious issues faced by the Saudi women to a public debate (House, 2013). This has resulted in women in Saudi Arabia feeling secluded, and constantly undermined in a male-dominated society. They cannot participate in the decision making equally or enjoy similar political rights as men. For example, when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held its first election since 1963 for members of the municipal council on a non-party basis, women were not allowed to vote.

While such restrictions are exasperated by the existing political structure and argued to be derived from Islamic Law, they are essentially reinforced by a strict interpretation of Islamic Law, rather than Islam, itself. That is why, while the legal system may well be based on Islamic Law, it is the use of the strict interpretation of

Islamic Law which is the main cause for concern for many Saudi women. Some religious scholars, for example, argue that according to *Shariah*, the primary role of a woman is that of a nurturing mother and a housewife (Sabbagh, 1996). However, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) himself says "every Muslim male and female, is requested to seek for knowledge, so both sexes are equal in searching for education" (Al-Hariri, 2006, p. 51). Additionally, there are instances in Islamic history where the wives of the Prophet took on important public roles. Hamdan (2005), for examples, notes that:

> [O]ne of the wives of Prophet Mohammed, Aysha, led an army of 30,000 soldiers, cooked for them, and helped medicate them. Aysha negotiated various issues and political matters with Prophet Mohammed, who freely acknowledged her wisdom (p. 53).

Therefore, it can be argued that justifications for a domestic role for women stems from a fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic Law. According to Moaddel and Karabenick (2008) "religious fundamentalism is conceived as a distinctive set of beliefs and attitudes toward one's religion, including obedience to religious norms, belief in the universality and immutability of its principles, the validity of its claims, and its indispensability for human happiness" (p.1675). Accordingly, some scholars argue that the problem of gender inequality and discrimination against women is not part of Islam itself, but rather a product of strict and literal interpretation of religion by state funded scholars. When issuing religious opinions, state-funded scholars deliberately avoid the evolving social context of the Saudi society, and maintain a more patriarchal approach to reasoning (Al-Heis, 2011).

The voice and influence of the conservative groups in Saudi Arabia remains very strong, and it can be argued that this is one of the major obstacles to women's liberation in the Kingdom. Today, women face many disadvantages in certain areas of family law, such as divorce and custody of their children. Additionally, women have been banned from driving, which has had a significant impact on their economic and financial emancipation (Al-Heis, 2011). In terms of civil rights, women are not able to pass on their citizenship to their children if they are married to non-Saudi men. There

is an exception to this rule which allows only sons of Saudi women married to non-Saudi husbands to apply for citizenship at the age of 18 (Al-Heis, 2011). Moreover, women need approval from their male guardians in almost all-important aspects of their life, such as travelling abroad for studies, accessing welfare, and employment. Though the royal decree allowed women candidacy for municipal council elections, they needed approval from their guardian to participate, which was often restricted (Johnson, 2005).

The problem occurs when many people are unaware of the legitimate language of the religious sects that actually challenges gender inequality. Though women can use this source to prove their worth to the very conservative communities (Hamdan, 2005), as Al-Heis (2011) underlines, it does not help when a vast majority of the Saudi citizens themselves agree with the patriarchal interpretations presented by scholars. In such circumstances, inequality between men and women is not seen as discrimination, but rather a balance between the rights and duties of men and women which are considered to be prescribed by religion (Al-Heis, 2011, p. 12).

More recently, there has been a drive to form a progressive movement and push for equal rights for women in areas such as family law, civil rights, education, employment and access to healthcare. Rajkhan (2014) notes that in 2012, the then King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz issued a decree to allow women to enter the Consultative Council and essentially be nominated for candidacy in municipal council elections; however, when the elections for municipal council members were held in 2015, women were not allowed to vote. The Crowne Prince Muhammad Bin Salman has also taken some measures to improve women's rights in the country, such as allowing women to drive, a royal order which is to be implemented in the Kingdom by June 2018, and which will arguably reduce the influence of the guardianship system.

3.2. Male Guardianship as a form of Patriarchy

A report published by the Human Rights Watch in 2008 defined male guardianship as one of the most severe violations of Saudi Women's human rights (HRW, 2008). The guardianship system in Saudi Arabia implies that every woman must have a '*mahram'*, which is translated as a male guardian, typically related by blood (HRW, 2008). This

condition applies to all women in Saudi Arabia, regardless of their economic and social status (Tønnessen, 2016). The primary guardian for a woman under this system is her father. However, depending on various circumstances explained below, the guardianship of a woman will be transferred as her status in the society changes. For example, once a woman is married, it is assumed that the husband now has the role as her guardian. In the event of divorce or the death of the husband, the guardianship of a woman is transferred back to her father, or if the father is not alive, the next oldest male, such as the brother, becomes the guardian (Tønnessen, 2016).

The foundation of the male guardianship mechanism in Saudi Arabia is the conservative interpretation of the Quran (Doumato, 1999).In particular; the interpretation of the following verse of the Quran is often used as the justification of the male guardianship in Saudi Arabia.

> Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.[1] (Quran 4:34)

In the above-quoted verse, the particular Arabic word '*qawammun*' has been interpreted by conservative religious scholars as 'male guardian'. A more progressive and linguistic meaning of this word is 'breadwinner' (Sondy, 2015, p. 50). The interpretation of the entire verse would change if this meaning of the word were adapted. Nonetheless, as Doumato (2000) argues, conservative segments in Saudi Arabia have promoted traditional patriarchal roles for women such as taking care of

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[1] "Arrija_lu**gawwa_mu_n**a 'alannisa_'ibima_ faddalalla_huba'dahum 'ala_ ba'diwwabima_ anfaqu_ min amwa_lihim, fassa_liha_tuqa_nita_tunha_fiza_tullilgaibibima_ hafizalla_h(u), walla_titakha_fu_nanusyu_zahunnafa'izu_hunnawahjuru_hunna fil mada_ji'iwadribu_hunn(a), fa in ata'nakumfala_ tabgu_'alaihinnasabila_(n), innalla_haka_na 'aliyyankabira_(n)" (Quran 4:34)

the house and children, which conveys an image of what they consider to be an ideal woman.

Conservative interpretations of the Quran and traditional customs in the case of male guardianship have been upheld by the government as well. Although guardianship is not explicitly codified in law in Saudi Arabia, it is enforced through legal provisions and regulations that require a male guardian's authorisation or the presence of the guardian when a woman seeks to access a number of services, including government welfare (Ertürk, 2009). As a result, the guardianship system affects women's lives in many aspects. For example, both marriage and divorce is considered illegal unless a male guardian approves them. Although there is no legal requirement of guardianship for accessing healthcare, unaccompanied women can be denied access to medical assistance in certain cases, such as operations pertaining to sexual and reproductive matters (Ertürk, 2009). The guardianship has also financial implications for women. For instance, women find it difficult to access the welfare system or seek financial help without permission from a guardian (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Despite the fact that the guardianship system restricts women's liberty in many ways in Saudi Arabia, there are a number of areas where a guardian's approval is not necessarily required. Among these are women's right to undergo medical operations—other than those mentioned earlier, open a business, perform financial transactions, own property, inherit, and choose their education. However, in reality, access to these areas can be restricted on an arbitrary basis depending on the stance adopted by a particular institution (Ertürk, 2009).

Granted, the role of the government in enforcing the guardianship system is not straightforward. For the most part, there are no written laws or decrees that explicitly mandate the system of guardianship. Nevertheless while several measures have been taken recently, the government has not done much to curb the practice up to date (HRW, 2008).

The Human Rights Watch (2008) noted that on two occasions, in 2009 and 2013, the government of Saudi Arabia had agreed to abolish the guardianship system after its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

However, no legislative steps have yet been taken in order to formalise this. In addition, the arbitrary application of the guardianship system arguably hinders the efforts taken to move towards a more progressive stance on male guardianship.

Ertürk (2009) argues that by allowing men the power of guardianship over women can be seen as condoning or allowing abuse of women and children. He notes a number of cases where women were not able to file complaints with the police, or access certain healthcare provisions, as these institutions, including their women employees, believed that approval was required from their guardian. These are not the only cases of abuse recorded as a result of the guardianship system. In 2013, a hospital in Saudi Arabia postponed amputating a critically ill woman's hand due to lack of approval by her guardian, in this case her husband, who had died in the same car crash that left the wife and daughter critically injured (Human Rights Report, 2013). In 2005, a happily married couple was ordered to divorce by the court. In this case, although the couple had married with the approval of the wife's father, following the death of the father, her half-brother, who became her legal male guardian, accused the husband of being from a lower status tribe and of failing to disclose this information at the time of seeking approval to marry her half-sister (House, 2013). As a result, the woman had to spend four years in jail with her daughter until the Supreme Judicial Council overturned the decision (House, 2013).

Against this background, there have been many domestic and international calls on the Saudi government to end the guardianship. In the past, women fought against guardianship through legal avenues, but have largely failed to obtain considerable success (Hamdan, 2005; Deif, 2008). Recently however, more and more women have begun to express their discontent with the guardianship system. The first petition by women demanding the end of the male guardianship system was signed by more than 14,500 people and was delivered to the Saudi Royal Court in 2016 (Ensor, 2016). In addition to the internal pressure faced by the government, there are also calls by international organisations such as the Human Rights Watch to end this practice. Though such pressures yielded a positive response initially, resulting in an official statement that the government would reconsider the practice, the government later

stated that the current law of Saudi Arabia protected equal rights for men and women and that no amendment was thus necessary (Tønnessen, 2016).

As al Alhareth et al. (2015) argue the perpetuation of the guardianship mechanism is a clear indication that women suffer from exclusion and lack of autonomy in Saudi Arabia. The guardianship system consigns the Saudi women to the legal status of minors (Almuhaythif, 2015). Women are required to present permission of their guardians to access a number of services. As the following section will discuss, this requirement becomes more complex and problematic in the case of domestic and sexual violence.

3.2.1. *Male guardianship and sexual and domestic violence against women in Saudi Arabia*

The guardianship system has a significant impact on women in the areas of domestic and sexual violence. Generally, there are two main problems faced by women who are victims of domestic violence due to the guardianship system. Firstly, if such an incident occurs, women find it difficult to seek medical care and file a police complaint without a guardian's permission. Ertürk (2009) notes a number of incidents where women were not able to file a complaint with the police due to a lack of authorisation from their guardian. Furthermore, as DeLong-Bas (2004) points out, in the case of domestic violence, the abused woman is more likely to be charged with accusations of disobedience of her guardian, rather than the guardian being charged for the offence. Secondly, even if women are admitted to hospitals, they are still required to present an identity card (ID card) as a form of identification, which in most cases is held by the guardian (Almosaed, 2004). The ID card can also be used to file a police complaint and access courts; however, in reality, women still face difficulties in accessing these services even if they have their ID cards (Al-Arabiya, 2013).

In case of sexual violence, similar issues persist. Sexual violence in Saudi Arabia is a difficult topic of discussion, as it is considered among the taboo topics in the country (Ertürk, 2009). Thus, the advocacy efforts against such forms of violence are often difficult. According to Al Nafjan (2013), the women who are victims of sexual violence or harassment, especially by the members of their family, are often hesitant to report

such incidents due to the fear that this could affect their own economic livelihood and the well-being of their children. For example, in case the perpetrator is the legal guardian, the woman may be reluctant to report the incident, as she needs her male guardian to drive her to work due to the ongoing driving ban. As the police report would mean that she would no longer be driven to work by him, she would then need to rely on other drivers or use taxis to commute to work, which can be very costly (Al Nafjan, 2013).

The current cultural norms are also argued to favour men, especially when abuse is to be reported by women. For example, a woman who is abused by her husband or guardian is left in a position where she is unable to report the abuse, as the authorities would ask the woman to be accompanied by her guardian for her to file a police complaint. Additionally, the Regulation on Protection from Abuse, which is the main regulation that deals with abuse and the framework within which solutions to such issues are sought in Saudi Arabia, is also considered flawed (Eldoseri, 2013), mainly because it does not introduce any measures to offset the patriarchal factors that hinder the reporting of domestic violence where the perpetrator is the male guardian.

It is clear that the system of guardianship is repressive for Saudi women and provides a source of dominance for Saudi men. Although many women in Saudi Arabia have been in favour of the system of guardianship, there are now an increasing number of women who oppose this practice (HRW, 2008).

3.3.   Polygamy as a form of Patriarchy

The practice of polygamy is allowed in Islamic Law. Prior to the establishment of Islam, polygamy was a practice well-known to the past civilisations such as the Hebrews, Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Assyrians, Japanese, Hindus and the Germanic people (Roded, 2011). It was also a common practice among the pagan Arab tribes before Islam, and there was no limitation on the number of wives a man could take. With the advent of Islam and Islamic law, a restriction was placed on the number of wives a man could marry. Quran specifies he conditions for entering polygamous marriages as follows:

If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans,

marry women of your choice two, or three, or four; But if you fear

that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), Then only

one .... (Quran 4:3).

While this verse provides the justification for polygamy, it is often interpreted with bias towards women (Aldosari, 2016). Such an interpretation prioritises men's sexual needs over women's emotions, therefore leaving women in a position of constant subordination by men. However, a close examination of the verse shows that a condition of fairness is placed on men if they are to consider marrying more than one woman. The verse clearly states that if a man is afraid that he is unable to deal justly and fairly with multiple wives, then he should only marry one woman. Nevertheless, the Saudi policies promote a certain understanding of polygamy based on male convenience, rather than a religious duty or social necessity (De Long-Bas, 2015; p 289).

In the Islamic world in general, and in Saudi Arabia in particular, polygamy is synonymous to polygyny, where a single male is considered to be capable of fulfilling the needs and desires of multiple women (Yamani, 2008). Polygamy is a very common practice in Saudi Arabia and prevails across both educated and uneducated segments of the Saudi society. Official statistics on polygamy show that more than half a million men were involved in polygamous marriages in Saudi Arabia in 2016 (Alarabiya, 2016). Yamani (2008) presents two main reasons for the high number of polygamous marriages in Saudi Arabia. While the first one is the increase in the Saudi personal wealth due to high oil revenues, and second one is the shift towards the religiously permitted way of marrying multiple wives, since extra marital affairs are considered morally wrong under Islamic law. A problem with such reasoning is that it prioritises men's desires over women's needs. Although an increase in personal wealth enables a man to look after more wives, this reasoning does not take into consideration the emotional needs of the women or the fairness that is required in marital affairs.

Some Islamic scholars list various reasons, such as the sterility of a woman, or a chronic illness, as well as insatiable sexual desires on the part of some men, to justify

why polygamy might be a better choice than monogamy. A study undertaken by Islam House on polygamy in Islam claims that monogamy leads to divorce, extra marital affairs, or prostitution (cited in van Geel, 2012). The study further outlines a number of conditions and questions to assess if polygamy is indeed a better solution for the consequences a society can face. For example, if the woman is sterile and unable to bear children, while her husband is interested in having children, the women is asked whether her husband should divorce her and marry a second wife or if he should marry a second wife and provide both his wives with equal rights (Al-Sheha, 2010). Another scenario is when the woman is chronically ill and cannot maintain marital relations with her husband, in which case the study suggests that the husband should keep her and take a second wife. The first wife in this situation would maintain all her rights as a wife and would be cared for. And lastly, the study states that there are some men who are financially strong and sexually demanding with higher levels of testosterone, and that in such cases one wife might not be able to fulfil the sexual desires of the man. Hence, if the woman's menstrual period or after-birth-confinement period is notably longer than normal, or if she has no sexual desires to match that of her husband, the study suggests that it is better for the man to acquire other lawful wives who can help keep him satisfied, rather than remaining frustrated and pent up, or seeking unlawful sexual satisfaction outside the marriage (Al-Sheha, 2010, p. 17).

While these points are worth considering, it is obvious that such reasoning takes mainly a male-dominated perspective when supporting polygamy. For each of the points mentioned above, the opposite scenario can also be true to a large extent. For example, there may well be a case in which a woman desires children, but unable to have one due to her husband's sterility, or where her husband is chronically ill and is unable to fulfil his marital relations with her. Yamani (2008) argues that the main rationale behind the male-dominated perspective in justifications of polygamy is to protect them from engaging in extra martial affairs and to preserve the advantages of the existing system for men. Roded (2011), on the other hand, refers to the attraction of a new female partner, the desire to boost a man's virile image of himself, financial

reasons, changes in the social environment, levels of religiosity, and/or the wife's career that render her inappropriate.

However, the practice of polygamy has been challenged by Saudi women in recent times, for increasingly more Saudi women have begun to consider it as a form of abuse (Al Khateeb, 2007; Yamani, 2008). Studies indicate that higher levels of educational attainment by women in Saudi Arabia are the main reason behind this shift of perception. Higher levels of education have led women to demand certain rights and reject oppression caused as a result of prevalent patriarchal practices. Among the uneducated women in Saudi Arabia, however, polygamy has been found to be an acceptable practice, and often viewed as a solution to the 'shortage of men' available to marry (Alarabiya, 2015). Educated women, on the other hand, are becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to polygamy, resulting in a decline in this practice among the educated women (Aziz, 2015).

Hence, it seems that education has helped Saudi women voice their dissatisfaction about oppressive customs and allowed them to make informed choices. This is evident from the statement of Al-Huwaider, a Saudi women's right activist, that the new generation of Saudi women do not rush to get married due to increasing financial independence. Additionally, women that make the decision of getting married refuse to be part of a polygamous relationship. Salhi (2010) also provides evidence for the declining trends in polygamous relationships and argues that it is mainly due to economic restrictions, diminishing gap between men and women in terms of their educational levels, and the increasing ability of the educated women to challenge and refuse patriarchal practices. He states that these factors have also shifted the family dynamics from an extended family to a nuclear family, further resulting in the rejection of patriarchal practices.

There has also been an increasing push for women's right in Saudi Arabia recently (Aldosari, 2017). As a result, some positive changes have been implemented by the Saudi Government, such as steps towards formally criminalising domestic violence against women, through the introduction of National Family Safety Programme (NFSP) (Aldosri, 2016). Women are now also increasingly being allowed to participate in the

country's political sphere, with authorities allowing women to participate in municipal council election in 2015 (Aldosri, 2016). Furthermore, there have also been advancements in access to education and employment by women, which is discussed in more detail in the following sections of this Chapter. However, an area that still lacks reforms is that of the acceptance of polygamy. According to Al Kashab (2017), the government has not brought about any changes to the rules pertaining to polygamy, mainly by using the argument that it is allowed under the provisions of Islamic Law (Shariah).

4. Social and Political Rights of Women in Saudi Arabia and Women's Role

In Saudi Arabia, women live under persistent legal and cultural prohibitions, both inside and outside the home (Mtango, 2004). The restrictions embedded in law are restrictive and receive strong support from the patriarchal structures in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, improvement in women's status in Saudi Arabia does not only require legal and political reform, but also considerable social change.

Saudi Arabia ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2000, along with a number of other Muslim countries, including Iran, Pakistan and Jordon. Although this looks like a positive step taken by the Kingdom, the ratification of the Convention is subject to a number of reservations that state that the Kingdom will not be obliged to implement any provision in CEDAW that contradicts Islamic Law. Given the conservative interpretation of Islamic Law applied in Saudi Arabia, this is problematic. For example, when reviewing Saudi Arabia's compliance with the implementation of the Convention, the CEDAW Committee noted that the requirement of equal citizenship rights of men and women contradicted the prevalent Islamic Law in Saudi Arabia, according to which citizenship could only be passed to children exclusively through the father (Kelly and Breslin, 2010). Consequently, the CEDAW committee was critical of the Kingdom's implementation of the Convention and called for Saudi Arabia to enact gender equality laws (Kelly and Breslin, 2010). Nevertheless, as Mtango (2004) notes, the Saudi government had declared in the past that the laws pertaining to

marriage, inheritance and women's testimony were regulated by Islamic Law, and were therefore non-negotiable.

constant challenge faced by the Saudi women. However, there are promising signs that the Saudi society has begun to confront such challenges faced by women. An important development in this regard has been the establishment of the National Society of Human Rights, an organisation tasked with investigating complaints on matters such as physical, sexual and psychological abuse faced by women (Fatany, 2015). Indeed, such crimes have no place in society and are not condoned by any religion. For Saudi Arabia in particular, where Islamic Law is the norm, Islam itself directs Muslims to treat women with kindness and respect (Quran 4:19). Additionally, a number of government policies have been issued to reverse the female leadership deficit. A prime example is the Shura Council, which appointed 30 women members in 2015. Women attended the Council among men rather than being consigned to a female-only area. They were also received by the King and his Crown Princess (Al-Sudairy 2017). Furthermore, in 2015 women were granted the right to be nominated in municipal elections which itself is a breakthrough. There were a total of nine hundred women that participated in the first elections out of which 37 women held the seats (Al-Sudairy 2017).

But the reality in Saudi Arabia is sometimes far from this. A Saudi woman's life is dependent on the goodwill of a guardian, which limits her freedom to engage in a meaningful social life. Education and employment are the two fields of social life that Saudi women experience restriction and discrimination.

4.1.   Women's Education

Discrimination against women and the struggle for their equal rights continue to be a major problem in Saudi Arabia (Fatany, 2015). Women's potential in Saudi Arabia remains under-utilised, and Fatany (2015) argues that the best way to increase awareness of their rights is to provide them with the opportunity to get education at a very young age and to choose any subjects they want.

The history of education in Saudi Arabia shows that women have had difficulties in realising their educational aspirations, mainly due to opposition from conservative segments who have spoken against women's education, arguing that women should only take on the traditional roles of child-rearing and housekeeping (Al Rawaf and Simmons, 1991). In the past, such opposition also took the form of demonstrations. For example, in 1963, the Saudi government had to intervene and stop the demonstrations taking place in the city of Buraydah against plans for educating women (Lacey, 1981). Prior to this, in 1940, when the Saudi government began sending some bright Saudi men abroad to study, women were restricted from accessing such opportunities (Lacey, 1981). However, following an appeal with the then King Faisal, Fatina Amin Shakir, one of the very first Saudi women to hold a Ph.D., succeeded in obtaining scholarship to study abroad. Two conclusions can be drawn from these examples. Firstly, there has been some progress in bringing about educational reforms for women in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, since its inception, women's education has unfortunately faced resistance from mainly religious groups.

Prior to the foundation of public schools in Riyadh in 1960, Saudis were provided informal schooling, which largely consisted of religious subjects such as Quran recitations, *Hadith* and learning how to pray and fulfil religious obligations (Hamdan, 2005). This education was available for both boys and girls. However, once girls attained puberty, their informal schooling was stopped, and strict rules of segregation and veiling were enforced (Altorki, 1986). Indeed, under Wahhabism, women's right to religious education to a level comparable to men is recognised (Doumato, 2000). However, in reality, even before any formal schooling structures were introduced in Saudi Arabia, women received far less religious education than men, which served to maintain the patriarchal values in the country.

Even after formal schooling structures were established and King Faisal was able to convince tribal Bedouins of the importance of formal schooling for girls (Huyette, 1985), conservative religious scholars only approved women's education on certain conditions. For example, conservative religious scholars insisted that the walls of the girls' schools should be high and there should be backup screens behind entrances. They also required a strict ID checking regime to ensure that no unauthorised

personnel could get in and out of the schools, and that girls were picked up from school only by their guardians (Huyette, 1985). Nonetheless, since its inception, secular and formal education for women has met with disapproval, as non-religious education has been regarded as dangerous for women.

It must also be noted that King Faisal and his wife Iffat, who was a pioneer on educational reforms for women in Saudi Arabia, undertook some measures to persuade the conservative segments of the society to tolerate women's education. For example, they stated that the purpose of Darul Hanan (House of Compassion), the first women's school established in 1957, was to raise good mothers based on Islamic and modern education (Hamdan, 2005). A widely held conservative belief at the time in Saudi Arabia was that a child's learning of religion and manners should take place at home, and the fundamental role of women was to raise children. Thus, in order to receive some support from the conservative scholars, education had to be shown to enhance the role of the woman as a mother.

Nonetheless, past reforms have been instrumental in improving access to education for women. Thanks to these reforms, the literacy rate[2] among women in Saudi Arabia has seen significant increase over the years (See Figure 2 below).

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[2]Adult literacy rate is the percentage of people aged 15 and above who can both read and write and understand a short and simple text about their everyday life
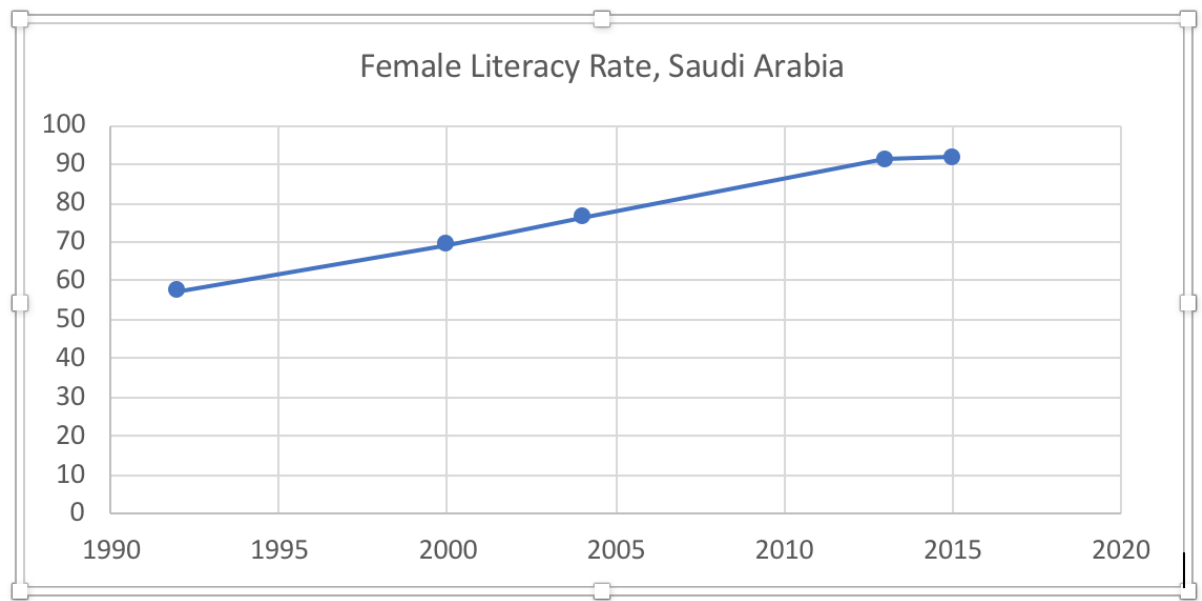
Source: World Bank, 2017

There has been a recent increase in the number of women attending higher education to pursue Master's and Doctorate level degrees. Statistics provided by Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) suggests that newly enrolled students in higher education (Bachelor's, Diploma, Master's and Doctorate) amounted to 393,131 in 2016. Women constituted 182,088 (46.3 percent) of these newly enrolled students (SAMA, 2016). Additionally, the total number of graduates from higher education in Saudi Arabia stood at 204,000, out of which female graduates amounted to 105,600, representing 51.8 percent of the total number of graduates (SAMA, 2016). The current state of women's participation in education can be credited to the steady increase in the level of investment in female education (Ministry of Education, 2010). Al Banawi and Yusuf (2011) also notes the increasing personal wealth created as a result of oil revenues as one of the most important reasons for the improvement in women's access to education.

With the increasing literacy rates among the women, there has also been a strong demand by women to have access to equal opportunities in other educational areas as well (Kelly, 2003). Following early challenges, and led by Fatina Amir Shakir's

example, women are now allowed to study abroad (Al-Alhareth, Al-Dighrir and Al-Alhareth, 2015). The government introduced overseas scholarship programmes for women—though guardians must provide permission or accompany women abroad for this to be accepted. Some have questioned the motives of this scheme. For example, Madawi Al-Rasheed (2010) argues that the increase in the number of women given scholarship abroad is merely to have them function as ambassadors whose mission is to change Western perceptions of Saudi women. Nevertheless, there are notable achievements in support of more educational opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia, such as the opening the Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh in 2009, which is the world's largest female-only university. The University consists of three main colleges, the College of Humanities, the College of Sciences (teaching mainly social sciences) and the College of Medicine (PNU, 2017). These developments can arguably pave the way for broader changes within the Saudi society. Saudi feminist Samar Fatany, for example, credited the Saudi King for extending women's work opportunities beyond education and medical sectors into areas such as banking, IT, architecture, and science (Fatany, 2013).

Despite such improvements, there are still certain limitations on women's education in Saudi Arabia. One of them is the type of courses that women can enrol in. For example, only men were allowed to enrol in fields such as engineering in the past (Al Rawaf and Simmons, 1991), mainly because women's employment in engineering was considered incompatible with sex segregation (Doumato, 1992). Degrees in the fields of engineering and natural sciences are still not on offer at the Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University. Due to the sex segregation in the Kingdom, female-only universities also lack the expertise for offering subjects such as engineering (Hamdan, 2005). Additionally, it has been argued that the quality of education received by women is lower to that of men, as male teachers are better trained than female teachers (AlMunajjed, 1997). Therefore, women's degrees are concentrated in fields such as education and training, human sciences, natural sciences and Islamic Studies (Alderazi, 2013).

According to Jerichow (2005), there have been drastic changes to women's educational situation in Saudi Arabia following the opening of the first public school

in 1960. Despite the fact that there have been considerable challenges along the way, the advancement of women's education has created rapid change in the attitudes of women against traditional patriarchal beliefs in Saudi Arabia. Women are now more aware of their rights, and hence use education as one of the primary means to attain their liberation from oppressive patriarchal practices (Al-Asfour et al., 2017).

The increase in the level and access to education for women does not only contribute to women's independence and self-reliance, but also new employment opportunities. However, as the following section will discuss, still much needs to be done to bridge the gap between men and women in terms of the available fields for women, such as engineering and banking.

4.2.   Women's Share in Employment

According to Kelly (2009), increases in literacy and educational opportunities have resulted in a growing number of working women. However, while there is an increase in the numbers of women ready for employment, employment opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia are not as developed as educational opportunities. Saudi Arabia's population estimates as of mid-2015 suggest that women account for 49.8 percent of the Saudi population (SAMA, 2016). Yet when it comes to the ratio of women in the labour force, a discrepancy begins to emerge.

Figure 3: Saudi Labour Force Statistics

Total Labor Force: 11.9 million

Saudi Labor Force:
5.6 million
47% (of total labor force)

Saudi males employed: 4.1 million (34%)

Saudi males unemployed: 0.3 million (3%)

Saudi females employed: 0.8 million (7%)

Saudi females unemployed: 0.4 million (3%)
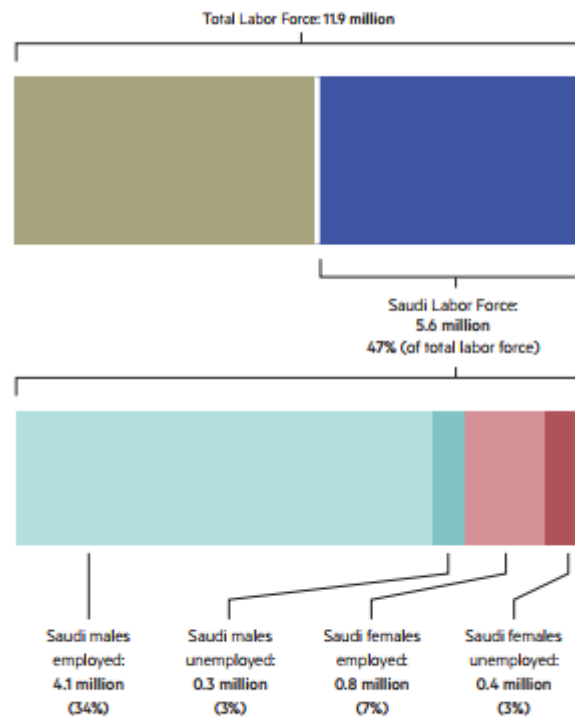
Source: GaStat (CDSI) 2015

As presented in Figure 2 above, of the total Saudi labour force (5.6 million), only 1.2 million (21.4%) were Saudi women. Of these, 0.8 million (66.7%) were employed. While the Saudi males in employment constitute 34.5% of the total labour force in Saudi Arabia (Saudi plus non-Saudi workers, n = 11.9m), Saudi women in employment only constitute 6.7%. . Additionally, statistics provided by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) suggest that in 2015 the percentage of the Saudi men in employment who worked in the government sector (75.8%) was far greater than that of the women in employment in Saudi Arabia (48.6%). Compared with 2014's statistics, Saudi female employment increased by 4 per cent in 2015. In the private sector, on the other hand, there were 1.2 million Saudi male workers and only0.5 million Saudi female workers at the end of 2015.Compared with the 2014 numbers, while the Saudi male workers in the private sector increased by 20.9 percent, Saudi female workers increased only by nine percent (SAMA, 2016).

A similar picture is visible in the case of the unemployment levels. In 2016, the unemployed Saudi females accounted for 33.8 percent of the total Saudi female labour force, while the Saudi men only constituted only 5.3 percent of the total Saudi male labour force (SAMA, 2016). These statistics provide support for the observations made by Varghese (2011) and Alderazi (2013) that the number of working women is not proportional to the number of women graduates from universities. As presented in the previous section, the majority of higher education graduates (bachelor's degree and above) were females; however, the high rate of unemployment among the Saudi women suggests that they lack employment opportunities. Based on the statistics provided by SAMA, the discrepancy seems to be larger in the private sector, where the number of Saudi women workers is less than half that of the Saudi male workers.

According to Alderazi (2013) and Varghese (2011), there are a number of reasons for the gap between men and women in the Saudi labour market. These include cultural obstacles, limited mobility of women-mainly because of the ban on women from driving, family responsibility, and competition from expatriate workers. The Saudi government has tried to provide job opportunities for women; however, such opportunities have been less than those afforded to men, as patriarchal norms in the country dictate that any employment opportunity created for women must be in accordance with the Islamic Law and Saudi traditions (Al-Dehailan, 2007).

A recent survey of 300 Saudi nationals on their attitudes towards employment provides further useful insights. The results of this survey suggest that women were significantly more likely than men to desire a career in Banking and Finance (57% vs. 35%), Government/Public Sector (38% vs. 24%), Healthcare (37% vs. 20%) or Media (21% vs. 10%) (Benchiba-Savenius, et al., 2016). Though the survey is only based on 300 Saudi nationals, it explains why there are a greater number of women employed in the public sector, compared to the private sector. Career preferences could also be influenced by the degrees obtained by women. Since women still lack educational opportunities in engineering and sciences, it is hard to imagine women taking up jobs in these fields.

Nonetheless, Saudi women's participation in the labour force has increased significantly over the last decade (See Figure 3 below) and they are taking more varied roles. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2016) women are employed in banks, in the computer operations of utility companies, in television and radio programming and in some ministries. They work as clerical assistants, journalists, university professors, social workers, physicians and nurses and are also active in women's charitable organizations as volunteers in order to express their suppressed capacities.

Figure 4: Employment of Women in Saudi Labour Force

Joining the Workforce
Employment of Saudi women is growing after years of stagnation.
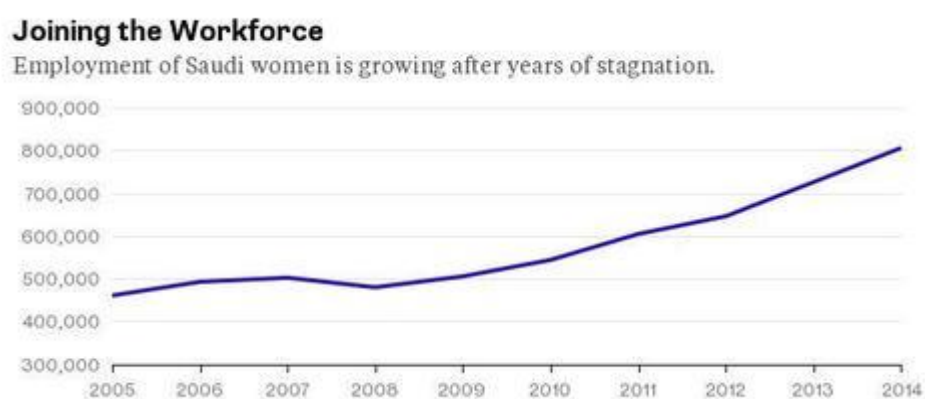
Source: NSHR, 2015

Many problems the Saudi women face have arisen due to the prevalence of the conservative norms in the country. As a result, the role of women remained limited to housekeeping and looking after children in the past. However, due to the recent economic changes in Saudi Arabia and around the world, surviving on a single income has become increasingly difficult for an average household. The changing economic landscape has thus opened doors for women to be able to join the workforce (Al-Dehailan, 2007). Additionally, the Saudi men, even though they were brought up in a traditional patriarchal society, are now increasingly more receptive to the idea of their wife, sister or daughter working, and even help them in seeking employment (Al-Dehailan, 2007). This shows that change in views can take place even in a patriarchal

society; men will agree to receive extra financial support from their wives, daughters or sisters and thus agree to their employment in times of financial need and growing expenditures. Although this is a positive development, it is still debatable as to whether women feel they control their earnings. As Sultana (2011) argues, while allowing women to work is one thing, controlling their salaries on the other hand, could still signal patriarchal values.

As Moghadam notes, (2004) the economic development, oil wealth, and increased integration within the world system after the 1970s provided several educational and employment opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, despite all the progress recorded, employed women in Saudi still feel shackled by some archaic rules such as the requirement that the woman should obtain the guardian's permission in order to be employed.

5. Conclusion

Patriarchal practices have been embedded in the Saudi society due to the strict and conservative interpretation of Islamic Law. The public support for conservative norms in the country has also ensured the prevalence of the patriarchal values and consigned women largely to the house. As a result, women continue to face the patriarchal practices of guardianship and polygamy. As discussed above, the patriarchal norms have also challenged women's access to education and employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the recent steps taken by the government and women's increased awareness of their rights have helped increase the literacy rates and education levels among the Saudi women, thereby creating many employment opportunities—though there is still a lot of room for improvement.

It can be argued that education will be the most effective challenge against the patriarchal and conservative norms in Saudi Arabia. Abdullah (2014) paints a very optimistic picture of the young Saudi women who have a fierce appetite to fight for freedom, equality and self-determination to such an extent that they are able to resist the traditional patriarchal beliefs and practices that have held them back for a long time. Similarly, Johnson (2005) notes that the strongest challenge to the patriarchal traditions in Saudi Arabia is the advancement of women's education. This is because

education allows women to focus on the more pressing issues affecting their lives, which they face largely due to the male-oriented society in Saudi Arabia (Arebia, 1994).

Because educated women are more willing to speak up for their rights and fight for liberation from such practices, there is a clear tension between the patriarchal norms and women's desire for emancipation. Accordingly, some argue that the frustration and anger surfaced due to being subjected to such practices, especially among the educated Saudi women, can partially account for the increasing use of violence by the Saudi women against men. Some go further to consider women's opposition to these norms as violence. Al-Ulayyan (2007), for example, claims that women's opposition against men who hold patriarchal norms can be considered as violence as well.

CHAPTER 3 – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is recognised to be a critical problem that not only affects women but also the children of all classes, irrespective of their race, financial status, religion, or level of education. Domestic violence can physically, sexually, and emotionally harm the victim that can disturb the family and the society. Research shows that the presence of one form of violence increases the likelihood of other forms of violence in the family (United Nations, 2016). Therefore, domestic violence is an important topic that should be explained carefully. This chapter starts by looking at the various definitions of domestic violence (Section 2) and then understanding its prevalence both in general and in Saudi Arabia (section 3). The chapter will then look at the possible causes of women perpetrated domestic violence (section 4) and present some past theories on the topic (section 5).

2. Domestic Violence

The definition of violence varies across cultures and fields of study. Every culture has its own understanding of violence in the relationship between husband and wife and among the family members and how best to tackle it. For instance, an act that is regarded as domestic violence in one culture may not be deemed as such in another (Alhabdan, 2015). As violence is context-bound, it can be identified as "marital violence", "spouse abuse", "battered wives" or "family violence" (Lawrence, 2003). Another problem faced in defining the term is that in some fields of study, the definition of violence may be narrowed down to focus on one or two types of abuse. For example, sociologists have described violence as any behaviour or conduct either performed intentionally or unintentionally resulting in any form of bodily harm or injury (Tønnessen, 2016). However, psychologists and mental health researchers consider violence as physical and emotional harm to a person including threats of physical harm or death and sex-related crimes (Alhabdan, 2015).

Moreover, some scholars believe that defining domestic violence is crucial in determining whether violence is committed by a woman and if it is done in self-defence(Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Swan and Snow, 2006). Women can be considered as acting in self-defence if they are aggressive towards those male family members that control and deny them their basic rights. This is similar to being physically attacked. Indeed, Eriksson and Mazerolle (2013) insists that constant control of men over women is a form of violence.

Since there are different cultural understandings of domestic violence, international organisations provide vast and more inclusive definitions. The United Nations (2016, p. 4), for example, describes domestic violence as a "relationship abuse that involves a form of brutal and forcible conduct required to perpetuate power and control over a former or current intimate partner." It adds that "[t]he abuse can either be physical and sexual or it can be emotional and financial, and can also contain threats, isolation, and intimidation" (The United Nations, 2016, p. 4). Likewise, the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011) defines domestic violence as "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim" (Article 3 (b) Council of Europe, 2011; p. 3).

An equally inclusive and ambiguous definition of the term is also present in the works of Western scholars. While Lawrence (2003) explains that domestic violence involves verbal and sexual abuse as well as emotional and economic abuse, Kelly (1999) defines the concept as the emotional, physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse of strength. In 2015, the Domestic Violence Act was passed in the UK also stated that intimidation, threat, and controlling behaviour are parts of domestic violence. Different ways are adopted to establish control over another in order to subordinate that person or make them dependent, either by cutting off their support system, misusing their resources and capacities for personal agendas and stripping them from the means required for their freedom, resistance, and escape or monitoring their everyday behaviour (Home Office, 2015, p. 22). Similarly, US also embrace a law

regarding the protection from domestic violence that consists of a wide variety of behaviours such as abusive behaviour, actual or threatened physical abuse, and coercive behaviour. However, it must be noted that the American definition of domestic violence is much wider, since it includes the protection of non-familial relationships and displays a broader range of behaviours (Alhabdan, 2015). Thus, the definition of domestic violence in the US is not dependent on family status or marriage.

Although it seems that there is no agreement on the definition of domestic violence in the Arab states, Arab countries have adopted more narrowly customized laws than the Western counties. For instance, Jordanian laws directly criminalises domestic violence, defined as a crime committed between the family members – who are legally married husband and wife, their children and grandchildren, their children from a marriage, the husband and wife's parents, the husband and wife's brothers and sisters, and an adopted child who is less than 18-year-old (Jordan Domestic Violence law, 2008). Furthermore, Bahrain has a law regarding family violence. Accordingly, domestic violence includes any violence on a female in the family circle by her guardian or anyone who has responsibility over her, such as her father, brother, or husband. The law states that the abusive acts involve abandonment, threat of harm, physical injury and emotional abuse (Al Hussein, 2014).

Likewise, in Saudi Arabia, domestic violence is contextualised within particular family relationships. The Saudi Protection from Abuse Act of 2013, for example, proclaims that there must be some form of relationship between the violator and the victim for the conduct to be seen as a domestic violence. This suggests a much narrower understanding of the concept then the one prevalent in the West. Any sort of physical abuse by a family member that is related to the victim, including use of body parts, weapons or objects to impose bodily harm, attempts as well as instances of murder are all considered as violence. However, controlling behaviour is excluded out of the definition of the term, as it is considered as part of guardians' rights. This has been widely criticised in the literature. For instance, Tønnessen (2016)notes that Saudi women's right to education and employment is restrained by spouses, parents or the wider family, and insists that such restraints must also be considered as a form of

domestic violence as it is currently in the West. While controlling behaviour by men over women is also present in the West, it is more serious in the case of Saudi Arabia because of the male guardianship system (Al Hussein, 2014).

In summary, there are key differences in the way domestic violence is defined in the West and the Arab countries. While the definition of domestic violence is contextualised within a family relation in the Arab countries, where the perpetrator and victim must be related, this is not the case in the West. The Western world uses a broader definition of domestic violence and even accounts for factors such as controlling behaviour as a form of domestic violence. This aspect is missing from the definitions used by the Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, which only considers physical abuse as a form of domestic violence. In the context of this study however, the definition of domestic violence takes a different meaning, as the violators are women. Swan and Snow (2006) argue that it is crucial to understand the context in which women's offending occurs; and in Saudi Arabia, it is within the contexts of patriarchal practices in general and the male guardianship system and polygamy in particular.

2.1. Intimate partner violence

When considering domestic violence, it is also important to consider intimate partner violence (IPV). According to the World Health Organisation, IPV "refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes, physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship." (WHO, 2012, p. 1). IPV therefore, describes acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence against women committed by their current or previous partner/husband, or boyfriend. According to Jewkes (2002), there have been inconsistencies in the way the IPV has been defined in global literature, therefore, in most studies, IPV is mostly used as a reference to physical violence.

A number of factors have been found that are associated with an increased risk of intimate partner violence towards women. A cross cultural study by Levinson (1989) suggested that in societies that had stronger ideologies of male dominance, incidence of IPV was high due the impact of such ideologies on many levels of society. For example, Levinson (1989) argues that such ideologies affect female autonomy, their

influence on the economy, participation in the political system and even the criminal justice system in that how seriously complaints by women are taken when they face abuse. Further studies, mainly on the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) suggest that women's financial dependency, low educational status, longer duration of marriage, and acceptance of male domination are also risk factors that lead to increased IPV (Davoudi et al., 2014; Boy and Kulczycki, 2008; Akmatov, et al., 2008). It was also found that men that belonged to patriarchal societies were also supportive of wife-beating (Yount and Li, 2009; Haj-Yahia, 1998).

When considering studies on IPV in Saudi Arabia in particular, a number of risk factors have been identified. These include unemployment and divorced status, lower or higher educational status, and younger or older age, with divorced women in particular found to be at an increased risk of IPV (Alzahrani, Abalkhail, and Ramadan, 2016; Barnawi, 2015; Bohlaiga et al., 2014; Fageeh, 2014; Tashkandi and Rasheed, 2009).

For the purpose of this thesis, it is therefore important to include IPV under the general umbrella of domestic violence.

2.2. Impact of Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence are often significantly negatively impacted, and suffer adverse psychological problems (Humphreys and Thiara, 2003). Among the negative effects of domestic violence includes what is referred to as "traumatic bonding", where the victim becomes emotionally dependent on the abuser, and convinces him or herself that the violence has either stopped or is about to stop (Dutton and Painter, 1993). Self-blame is another negative effect that victims suffer, as the victim may think that they are suffering violence because they themselves are to blame and therefore, try to change their behaviour in some way so they can feel safe from the violence (Herring, 2007). Being subject to domestic violence could also impact the situational awareness of the victim, adverserely affecting the ability to think about alternatives that may be open to her and the risk that is imposed to her children. Thus, the victims perception of reality is distorted and most of their energy is used in trying to survive (Miccio, 1999). In such a situation, threats to the childs life, or alternatives that seem

obvious to anyone from the outside become oblivious to the victim (Herring, 2007). Furthermore, according to Herring (2007, p. 4), "It is naive and simplistic to say that a woman whose partner is violent should simply leave the house or alert the authorities. For a mother to intervene to protect her child by warning the relevant authorities or restricting contact between the abuser and the child may be extremely dangerous." In some cases, it can be more dangerous for victims and their children to escape rather than remain with the abuser (Humphreys and Thiara, 2003; Brown, 2005). If the victims do escape, they may face other problems such as social exclusion, housing and financial problems (Becker, 1995).

It is for this reason that it is important that domestic violence is tackled effectively in society. In the UK, substantial work has been undertaken to address the issue of domestic violence, albeit with still some frustrations being cited by social workers, other professionals and victims (Hester, 2011). However, there has been substantial work in order to address these frustrations as well. For example, Hester's (2011) 'Three Model Planet' aims to address contradictions in approaches towards domestic violence and practice by arguing that "they are especially difficult to bring together into a cohesive and co-ordinated approach because they are effectively on separate 'planets'—with their own separate histories, culture, laws and populations (sets of professionals)." (Hester, 2011, p. 839).

In the United States, the Duluth Model is an important programme developed to reduce domestic violence against women (Linda, 2009). The Duluth Model was first conducted in 1981 in Duluth, the city after which the model has been named (Pence and Paymar, 2003). The model incorporated and coordinated actions from a number of agencies that dealt with domestic violence, while the curriculum for the model was developed by activists involved in the battered women's movement (Pence and Paymar, 2003). The Duluth Model is fundamentally underpinned by the feminist theory that men usually use violence against women to exercise power and control; a dynamic that is graphically represented by the Power and Control Wheel in Dululth Model posters (Haaken, 2010). The Duluth Model argues that the unequal social, economic and political status of women and children is responsible for their increase vulnerability to violence (TheDuluthModel, 2018). Therefore, the treatment used for

offending men is based on re-education as the model does not see "men's violence against women as stemming from individual pathology, but rather from a socially reinforced sense of entitlement" (Paymar and Barnes, n.d, p. 5).

However, both these models are based on the notion that it is men that initiate violence, and in the case of Duluth Model in particular, that women do not use violence in any other context other than in self-defence (Rizza, 2009). Furthermore, the Duluth Model has also come under criticism as it is seen as a concept of gender shaming, and asking men in Duluth Groups to admit male privilege (Dutton and Corvo, 2007).

3. Female-perpetrated domestic violence in numbers

This section begins by presenting available crime statistics and victim reports related to domestic violence. It further provides evidence to suggest that men are equally likely to be victims of domestic violence, if not more likely, and that the main reason why male victims are overlooked is largely due to lack of reporting of domestic violence incidents by male victims. Caution has to be applied when interpreting reports on domestic violence; according to Kelly (2003), such studies and reports do not always receive positive response, and the authenticity of these reports is also questioned, serving to lessen "the importance of complete defence of violent behaviour of women" (Kelly, 2003, p. 101).

Studies, such as those discussed in this section on domestic violence largely conclude that women are still at a disadvantage when compared with men, even though there has been an increase in female perpetrated domestic violence. For example, Tjadens and Thoennes (2000) evaluated data from the U.S. National Violence against Women Survey, and interviewed 8,000 women and 8,000 men. They concluded that 25 percent of women versus 8 percent of men were subjected to physical and/or sexual attack by their current or former partners in their lives. In addition, another survey shows that 7.5 percent of men living with women were victims of domestic violence while 15 percent of men living with men were subjected to domestic violence. Thus, the researchers conclude that domestic violence is primarily committed by men.

Similarly, a crime survey conducted in Scotland offers a similar picture. As Table 1 highlights, most of the cases reported were men assaulting women.

Table 1: Gender of the victim and culprit in incidents of domestic abuse documented by the Scottish Police for the year 2016.

Victim	Culprit	Percentage of reported incidents
Female	Male	92.1 %
Male	Female	7.2 %
Male	Male	0.4 %
Female	Female	0.3 %

Source: British Crime Survey 2016 self completion survey: 105

As Michael Kimmel (2002) discusses in his study of the quantitative literature on domestic violence, the results of the crime surveys in the UK (Mirrlees-Black, 1999), Canada (Pottie Bunge, 2000) and the U.S. (Rennison and Welchins, 2000; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000) suggest that the abuse experienced by women is common and different in form to that undergone by men. Dobash and Dobash (2004; p. 15) also specify different forms and degrees of violence-related incidents accounted by men and women. They state that "82 percent women and 66.1 percent of men describe men's violence as 'serious' or 'very serious' while merely 36 percent of women and 28.5 percent of men consider women's violence in the same way." (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; p. 15). DeLeon-Granados et al. (2006:359) report that during 1987 and 2000 in California "[f]emale arrest rates for domestic violence increased more than 500%, while male rates increased by 136%." However, "women composed 5% of all domestic violence arrests in 1987 and 18% of all such arrests in 2000."

Muftić et al., (2007; p. 754) also argue that female-perpetrated domestic violence is not offensive in nature, as women largely act for revenge purposes where the violence committed is inherently defensive. In addition, while women and men are both arrested during a case of mutual hostility, women commit less violence compared to

men. Moreover, Muftić et al., (2007) point out that when a couple is found in an act of violence, the police arrest both men and women regardless of who initiated it.

The data available from the British Crime Survey (BCS) – a self-completion survey– confirms the argument that it is the women who largely suffer the consequences of domestic violence. BCS of 2003/2004 shows that the spouse abuse was the most common form of intimate violence, as 28 percent of women and 18 percent of men encountered one or more types of partner abuse (Finney, 2006). Approximately 6 percent of women and 4 percent of men had encountered partner abuse a year before, which amounts to "around 900,000 female and 600,000 male victims" (Britton: 2012, p. 83). In 2016, BCS reported that 24 percent of women and 12 percent of men experienced non-sexual partner abuse that occurred among the adults aged 16 to 59, which is the equivalent of 4.3m women and 2.3m men. In addition, about 57 percent of women and 46 percent of men encountered non-physical abuse, such as emotional, economical and verbal abuse, making it the most common form of violence. The BCS survey of 2016 further presented that over the last seven years, violence against men decreased by 32 percent, while there was only 18 percent decrease in the case of violence against women. Similarly, the Scottish Crime Survey of 2016 also shows that 8 percent of men and 19 percent of women have experienced threats or pressure by their partners at some point in their lives (Cannon and Buttell, 2016).

Usually, the documents highlight men being the perpetrators, however, some researchers point out an increase in women's use of violence against men. For instance, DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2013) writes that the gender gap in crime has diminished in the U.S., probably due to the increased rates of female violence. Robertson and Murachver (2007) are of the opinion that men are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than women. In their analysis of 172 New Zealanders, even though there were no signs of any gender difference in the rates of major kinds of domestic violence (apart from small physical attacks, the rates of which increased in the cases of women), it was understood that the likelihood of men being the victim was more than that of the women (Robertson and Murachver, 2007). Hence, women appeared to be the wrong-doers in one-sided violent relationships. However, Dobash

and Dobash (2005) state, the prevalent view among the U.S. scholars is that women's attitude towards their male partners is equally harsh. According to the BCS that was held in 2001/2002, men were the victims in 19 percent of the total domestic violence incidents (Finney, 2006). DeLeon-Grenados et al.'s study on domestic violence in California between 1987 and 2000 provides a similar finding, showing that the number of women guilty of domestic violence against men has greatly elevated over the past years. Likewise, the British survey of 2010/2011 reports that while the number of domestic violence incidents where women were convicted were only 806 in 2004, this number increased to 3,968 cases in 2010.

Other statistics also disprove the argument that women are necessarily the most disadvantaged party in cases of domestic violence. Although women are more likely to experience a sexual assault, according to BCS, 29 percent of men and 27 percent of women encounter severe force, which shows that the women experience slightly more force compared to men (Table 2). Additionally, there are other surveys that show that the aggressive behaviour of men and women in a marital relationship is about the same (Straus and Gelles, 1990; Strauss, 1993; Saunders, 1986; and McNeeley and Robinson-Simpson, 1988; Washington, Buttell and Cannon, 2017).

Table 2: Type of abuse suffered by partner abuse victims, by sex and type of abuse.

England and Wales, adults aged 16 to 59

Percentage of victims once or more	Men (%)	Women (%)	All (%)
Non-physical abuse, threats or force (non-sexual)	80	83	82
Non-physical abuse	46	57	53
Threats or force	39	49	45
Threats	5	27	18
Force	37	40	39
Minor	19	26	23
Severe	29	27	27
Any sexual assault (including attempts)	4	12	9
Serious sexual assault (including attempts)	1	8	5
Less serious sexual assault	4	9	7
Stalking	34	32	33

Source: The self-completion British Crime Survey 2016, p. 105.

In the context of Canada and the U.S., for example, Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) insist that men and women are equally aggressive and hostile towards their partners. In the same light, Fontes (1999), cited in Barber (2008) uses time as a feature to highlight in his study that in the U.S. men abuse their female partner every 15 seconds and, females abuse their male partner every 14.6 seconds. Similarly, Gelles (1997) suggest that the aptness to perform violence against partner is found equal in both genders. Furthermore, a study by George (2007) also states that men and women are equally blamed for abuse in the relationship. As George (2007; p.15) notes, "…seven percent of women (65,300) and six percent of men (54,600) had faced partner abuse within the past five years…" Likewise, another study held between 1994-1999 shows "…seven percent of all Canadian women (14,269) and eight percent of all Canadian

men (11,607) had been met with at least one incident of intimate spousal abuse…" (cited in DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2003, p. 1). An interview conducted by Allen, Swan, and Raghavan (2009) on 232 Hispanic college students (92 men) in the United States also confirms this, as it showed that a large number of both genders were perpetrators of domestic violence.

Mankind Initiative is one of the important organisations that support male victims of domestic abuse. Their publication titled "21 key facts" (2012; p. 13-14) shows that "21 men and 94 women were murdered by a partner/ex-partner (defined as the key suspect) in 2010/11. This is similar to one man every 17 days". However, the evidence provided by some recent crime surveys (2010/11) and homicide studies (Kelly, 2003) is currently no more than suggestive that men who habituate with male partners are more likely to be at risk in comparison to the women who live with men (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

Although the figures presented above show that there has been an increase in female-perpetrated domestic violence against men, the actual figures may be larger, as discussed by scholars in the literature. This is largely due to the lack of reporting of such events by male victims. Leonard (2003), for example, claims that it is difficult to verify an approximate number of male victims, as they are reluctant to come forward and seek professional help. British Crime Survey affirms this logic in showing "that less than one in four women and one in ten men (23% and 8% respectively) of the worst cases of domestic violence were reported to the police" (cited in Home Office paper, 2004, p. 34). Even though the incidents may be filed to the police, sometimes they are not properly investigated; therefore, the perpetrator is not identified.

While most of the domestic and intimate violence to the police is unrecorded, the British Crime Survey (BCS) provides data on the reporting of these incidents. The survey established that more women reported domestic violence incidents to the police than men (Britton, 2012). Women (44%) reported more than twice as many as men (19%) reporting to professional organisations, and women were found to be three times more likely to complain to the police – female (29%) and male (10%).

It is evident from data that men also experience domestic violence, and there is an apparent increase in the female-perpetrated domestic violence. Yet, as Lawrence (2003) states, some men are still unable to admit to being violated and hence hesitant to address the issue because of a number of factors such as fear of social isolation, embarrassment, mockery, and being stereotyped. A study by Gadd et al., (2002) was one of the first studies to focus mainly on male victims of domestic violence in Scotland. According to the study, the male victims discussed the humiliation and shame when citing their reasons behind not reporting the abuse to police (Gadd et al., 2002). Furthermore, the study also found that the number of male victims of domestic violence had been under-reported in the Scotland Crime Survey 2000, because many of the participating men had misunderstood the questions in the survey. In a separate study by Lambert (n.d), based on interviews with organisations helping male victims of domestic violence, it was a general agreement among participating organisation that male victims were very reluctant in reporting domestic abuse. In the same study, participating organisations also challenged the notion that the use of violence by women was predominately for self-defence (Lambert, n.d).

Studies presented so far reveal mixed conclusions. Where some studies, such as (Dobash and Dobash, 2004) suggest that women are largely the victims in domestic violence, other studies such as Heady et al., (1999) and Strauss (1993) suggest that women are as aggressive as men in a relationship, and that domestic violence is a symmetrical issue. Women therefore can be perpetrators of domestic violence outside of the notion of self-defence and it is important to understand the reasons why women commit violence against men, especially in the domestic setting.

According to crime statistics reported by the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia, offences committed by the Saudi women against their guardians and spouses have been increasing in the Kingdom. In 2006, the Ministry of Interior noted that there were 23 reported offences committed by the Saudi women. In 2017, the reported number of offences by women stood at 120. Figure 5 below shows the increase in the number of reported offences by the Saudi women against their guardians and spouses from 2006 to 2016. Although there is a sharp decline in women's crime against their

guardians in 2015, the reason for this decline in unclear, and not explained in reports produced by the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 5: Saudi Women Crimes Against Guardians
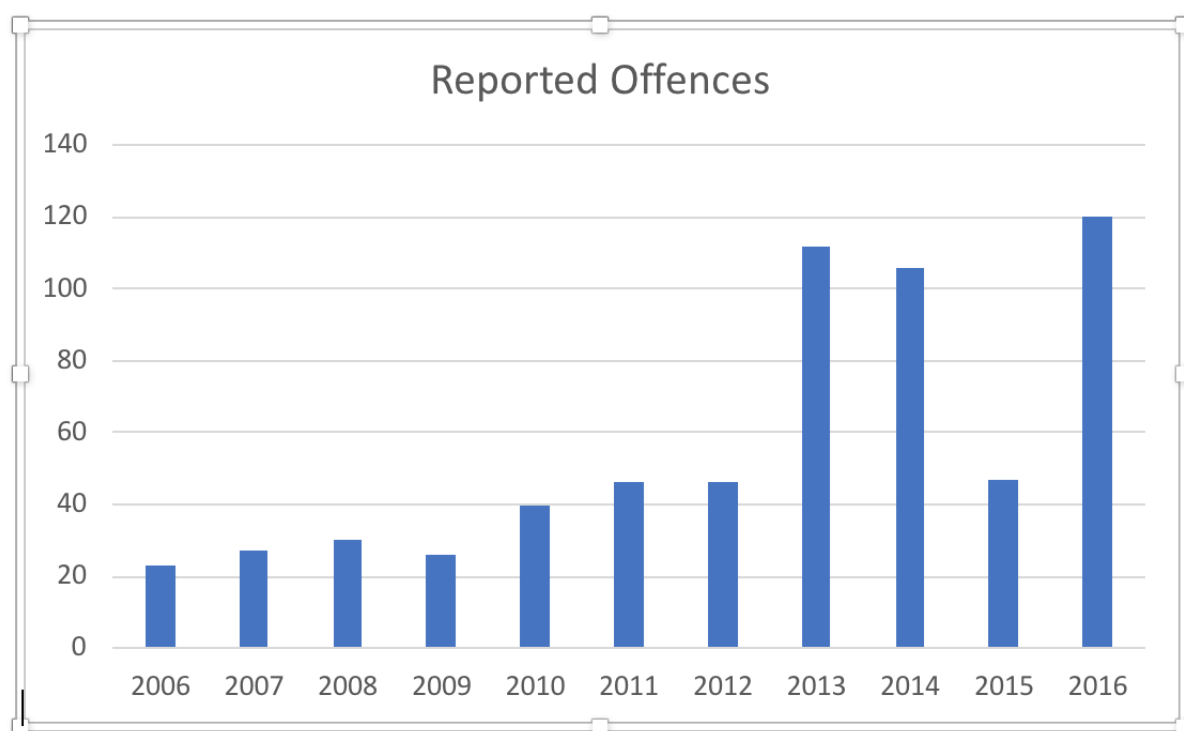
Source: Ministry of Interior, Saudi Arabia, 2017

Having presented the evidence for the increase in the female-perpetrated domestic violence, the next section turns to discuss the major reasons for female-perpetrated domestic violence by focusing on the related literature.

4. Why Do Women Commit Domestic Violence?

There are several studies on the crimes and homicides committed by women. Research shows that women commit offences within the premises of their home and mostly in the kitchen. The victim is usually their husband, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend (Kernsmith, 2005). Female perpetrators also use indirect methods in addition to direct methods. For instance, Stitt and Macklin (1995)report that the men under study expressed that their partners either exposed them to embarrassment or tried to wound them on face or the arm so the onlookers might believe they are on drugs

(cited in Gadd et al., 2002; p. 7). Moreover, it was reported that the abuse also involved verbal, emotional and psychological forms of cruelty. This section looks at some of the main reasons behind women's use of violence based on literature. Highlighting general factors behind women's use of violence is important as emerging reasons behind this study's participants for their use of violence can be compared for useful insight.

4.1.   Self-Defence

The discussions on the reasons for why women commit domestic violence usually revolve around the question of whether the act was performed in self-defence. A research conducted in the United Kingdom shows that 80 percent of the cases reported by women did not include any kind of self-defence (Carrado et al., 1996). Some of the researchers contend that women who abuse their male partners cannot be automatically deemed as acting in self-defence because women can also commence any act of violence (Stets and Straus 1990, p. 161), while some argue that the individual attributes of the violent females are the same as those of the violent males (Moffitt et al., 2001). Self-defence is discussed further in Section 5 of this chapter.

4.2. Alcohol and drugs use

Consumption of alcohol have been linked with an increased risk of violence (Farrington, 1998). Increased consumption of alcohol among men, and often women (Jewkes, et al., 2002) has been found to be associated with intimate partner violence (Hoffman et al., 1994; Kantor, 1993), although the links are not consistent. Therefore, it can be interpreted that alcohol consumption is not the root cause of domestic violence, but a factor that can trigger it. While Simmons et al. (2008) find the causes of domestic violence generally questionable, they concede that drug use or substance abuse are one of the factors leading to the domestic violence perpetrated by females.

Goetting (1987) shows that at least 37.5 percent of the women and 44.6 percent of their husbands were under the influence of alcohol before committing homicide. Blount et al., (1994) interviewed 42 women prisoners who had a history of

abuse and who had murdered their intimate partners. They also interviewed an additional 59 women that were in shelters for battered women. They compared the ratios of alcohol and drug use between the intimate homicide group and the shelter group. They found that the percentage of alcohol use was higher in women in the homicide group, including also that of their partners.

Substance abuse is also noted as one of the reasons for domestic crime, albeit with variations across subcultures. Women are met with much criticism when addicted to drugs, especially if it is cocaine. Some women are pressured to turn to prostitution to maintain their addiction (Erickson et al, 2000). Therefore, they are unable to sustain a loving and caring relationship as they are exposed to verbal and physical abuse, which may lead them to use violence in return.

However, in a report published in 2006, Thompson and Kingree proffer that the use of alcohol causes more violence in men against women than vice versa. Browne (1986) further suggests that alcohol and drug use was higher among the partners of the battered women held captive for murdering or for attempted murder than among partners of a comparison group of battered women. It is shown that in some of the cases the woman murdered her partner in order to save herself or her children from the brutal behaviour of her husband.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, although alcohol and use of other such substances is prohibit by Islamic Law, a study by Bassiony (2013) found that in Saudi addiction treatment settings, the most commonly abused substances were amphetamine (4 – 70.7%), heroin (6.6 – 83.6%), cannabis (1 – 60%) and alcohol (9 – 70.3%).

4.3. Provocation by Women

Corry et al. (2002) argue that one of the reasons as to why women conduct such brutal behaviour against men is "because they can" (p. 1). They state:

> Primary aggressor laws imprison the male and disregard research showing 50% of domestic assaults are mutual combat. That is why a woman is motivated to abuse her partner until he is unable to take no more (p. 1).

This shows that even though men may commit the resultant crime, women may be seen as having provoked their partners. An acclaimed patron of the 'symmetry' thesis confirms this in suggesting that "...assaults by wives are one of the many causes of wife beating..." (Straus 1993, pp. 78, 80). Straus also states that it is the responsibility of the wives to refrain from physical attacks on their male abuser regardless of the type and extent of the provocation" (Straus 1993, p. 80). He further suggests that if women's "assaults" result in male violence, then public policy and practices should change accordingly, "...including public service announcements, police arrest policy, and treatment programmes for batterers" (Straus 1993, p. 80). Male violence against women is thus considered as dependent on women's provocative acts of violence. Others also emphasise the reciprocal nature of domestic violence, and suggest conjoint couple therapy to resolve this issue (Moffitt et al.,, 2001, p. 27).

4.4. Anger

A number of studies on women's use of violence identified anger as a common theme in motivations behind women's use of violence (Barnett, Lee and Thelen, 1997; Hamberger, 1997; Flemke and Allen, 2008; Swan and Snow, 2003; Miller and Melloy, 2006; Stuart et al, 2006). Where some of these studies listed anger the primary factor, others considered anger in combination with another motivation, such as jealousy. In the study by Flemke and Allen (2008), one of the participants stated that:

> When he would be out for 3 days and wouldn't come home, I would get full of rage just waiting for him…. When he finally came home, I became so enraged that I hit him with a bat (p.68).

This, according to Flemke and Allen, was an example of anger release, which was also reported as the most common reason that women reported using violence against their partner in the study conducted by Barnett, Lee and Thelen (1997) and Stuart et al. (2006).

4.5. Retribution

In a study by Swan and Snow (2003), women stated that they had used violence against their partners as a way of getting back at them for what they perceived as

being wronged by their partners. Similarly, in the study by Stuart et al (2006), 35 percent of the women stated using violence against their partners for being emotionally hurt by them, and 20 percent stated that they used violence in retaliation of being hit first. According to Follingstad et al. (1991) and Hamberger et al. (1997) women are more likely to use violence in the form of retribution as a result of being emotionally hurt by their partners.

4.6. Fear and Defence of Children

A number of studies report fear as a primary motivation for violence by women (Cercone et al., 2005; Foa et al., 2000; Hamberger, 2005; Kernsmith, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005). Many also consider the fear factor in combination with the motivation to protect one's children (McCloskey et al., 1995, Foa et al., 2000, and Morash et al., 2000. In particular, the study by Morash et al. (2000) that focused on the Mexican descent families in the U.S. found that some women resorted to violence as a result of suffering from psychological abuse, which included, among others, threats that the husband would take away their children. Additionally, the study also reports that some women used physical force and violence against their husbands in order to protect them against their husband's violence.

5. Feminist theory and the Liberation Theory

Feminist theory provides a useful framework to study life experiences of women, especially in regard to their social position in society. The use of feminist theory provides a useful framework to analyse the reasons for female-perpetrated domestic violence, as it presents a number of related factors, such as women's education, employment, social standing, oppression and the patriarchal rules that they face, and their propensity to commit crimes against men. The basis of the current criminology theory is the male-based model of criminal justice; therefore, it does not adequately capture the experience of women committing crime. Notably, current theories fail to account for the needs of women in the criminal justice system, risk predicators or women's unique background and history. Following a gender-specific model of criminality is useful in accounting for these factors that lead women to use violence, especially against men.

5.1. Feminist Theory – Origins and Evolution

The first published studies on feminism emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The main focus of these studies was the importance of gendered roles that women performed in society (De Pizan, 1405), their theological superiority, and the lack of female equality. Notable works published during this time, such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 and *Married Love* by Marie Stopes, clearly demonstrated the discontent felt by women about their prescribed roles in society and the inherent inequality they suffered in various spheres of life, such as marriage. Nonetheless, feminist theory did not acquire its label until much later.

The evolution of feminist theories can be divided into three waves. The First Wave Feminism resulted from the writings published mainly in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands and the United States. The primary focus on this wave of feminism was political disenfranchisement of women. It was during the first wave of feminism that the very first Women's Rights Convention was held in 1848 in the U.S., followed by the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 that ended women's disenfranchisement in the United States. As noted earlier, the First Wave Feminism was primarily concerned with obtaining women's rights in political, social and legal areas, and hence it was instrumental in acquiring a number of rights for women such as access to education, the rights to execute a will, to choose their profession, to own property in their own name, to legislate divorce, to be granted custody of their children following divorce, and the right to vote.

The Second Wave Feminism began in the 1960s in the United States and is often referred to as *Women's Liberation Movement*. The focus of this wave of feminism was the sexuality and identity of women, and the various roles that women held in society. It was during the Second Wave Feminism that women highlighted and acquired key rights regarding abortion, reproduction, and workplace inequality. Thus, the introduction of equal pay laws and the equal rights amendment occurred during this period. Furthermore, laws and initiatives for the protection of women against violence

were also introduced during this time, such as marital rape laws, aid for battered women, domestic violence centres, and the National Organisation for Women.

The 1980s and the 1990s saw the Third Wave Feminism, which is also called as postmodern feminism. This movement is also sometimes referred to as the individual movement, as among the purposes of this movement has been to redefine what it means to be a feminist. It is argued that the Third Wave Feminism arose as a response to the perceived shortcomings of the Second Wave Feminism and the backlash created against the movements in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Coleman, 2009). Third Wave Feminism expanded feminism to include and acknowledge that women belong to a diverse range of backgrounds, identities, ethnicities, race, culture and religions (Rosemarie, 2009). As such, the traditional idea of feminism is rejected by the Third Wave feminists, allowing for the incorporation of diverse range of agendas such as queer theory, transgender politics, the interaction between race and gender, and individualist feminism in the study of women.

There is a clear sense of progression and impact when assessing the three waves of feminism. The first wave primarily focused on undertaking research on identifying inequalities and the sources of inequalities. Hence, areas such as employment, social conditions and ownership of property for women were highlighted, forming the basis of liberal feminism and social feminism. In the second and third wave of feminism, components of radical feminism, critical race feminism and postmodern feminism were integrated, allowing for the expansion of the mainstream feminist theory. Nonetheless, at each stage of the evolution of feminism, there was also widespread resistance. Much of feminist theory was seen as a rebellion; however, it did highlight some serious concerns underlying women's oppression such as gender discrimination, stereotyping of gendered roles, sexual objectification of women, and the patriarchal nature of society.

More, recently, there has been advancement of the fourth wave feminism. Fourth wave feminism dates from 2008, and is closely associated with the use of social media. According to Chamberlain (2017), the main focus of the fourth wave of feminism is justice for women and opposition to all forms of sexual harassment and violence

against women. A distinct characteristic of the fourth wave feminism is its "is it reliance and usage of technology and social media to connect and reach populations across cultural and national borders." (Looft, 2017, p. 894). Looft (2017) further explain that the women part of the fourth wave feminism are known for their 'savvy' use of technology and social media in order to tackle many of the issues that had been raised by the first, second and third wave feminism. In her seminal work, Baumgardner (2001) categorises the four waves of feminism and defines the fourth wave by its substantial 'online presence'. According to Baumdardner (2011, p. 251), "In place of zines and songs, young feminists created blogs, Twitter campaigns, and online media with names like Racialicious and Feministing, or wrote for Jezebel and Salon's Broadsheet. They commented on the news, posted their most stylish plus-size fashion photos with info about where to shop, and tweeted that they, too, had had an abortion." A number of recent campaigns are considered part of the fourth wave feminism, for example, the Times up, #MeToo movement, the 2017 Harvey Weinstein allegations, Every Day Sexism Project, No More Page 3, One Billion Rising, to name but a few.

The use of social media to voice concerns about women's right is also increasing in Saudi Arabia. More and more Saudi women are using their online presence to voice their concerns and demand their rights against the patriarchal norms prevalent in the Kingdom. Twitter and Instagram appear to be the two most widely used social media platforms by Saudi Women. A good example of such activism is the #IAmMyOwnGuardian movement which lobbies against the guardianship system in Saudi Arabia, started by Saafa Hassanein (Hassanein, 2018).

5.2. Liberation Movement and Women's use of Violence

Some researchers have focused on the relationship between women' liberation movement and increase in violence. In 1960s and 1970s a movement started with the name of Women's liberation movement as a tenant of the Second Wave feminism. The Liberation movement was a response against the overpowering of women within the societal, governmental and financial domains. The movement was mostly organised by the National Organisation of Women. It mainly aimed to give equal rights

to the women, in different areas, ranging from obtaining education to employment and salary, as well as societal roles. Consequently, women's status increased in the business sector, while there were declines in the number of women who were housewives only. The movement also emphasised several other elements, including the relationship between gender and victimisation, sexualisation of women, parenting and domestic violence.

Despite these achievements, the freedom brought a number of other problems. Adler (1975) explains that although women prospered in the workplace and in their career, some women also committed crimes. Hence, it may be argued that this movement not only enhanced the legal activities of women, but it also encouraged illegal participation of women in the society (Adler, 1975). Adler also claims that as women took the lead in professional ranking hence became more powerful, they also secured their position in accessing authority and funds. As a result, the increased employment rates correlated with increased corporate theft and forgery cases (p. 130). Additionally, Adler discusses that due to structural opportunities for women in the workplace, they took on male like characteristics such as authoritativeness and aggressiveness to succeed in the office; hence it also meant that women became more dependent upon violent means to attain their objectives (Adler, 1975). In order to substantiate the relation between women's liberation and women's involvement in crime Adler provides an example of a black woman. He argues that the black women are usually the only breadwinners in their family, which did not only result in their freedom but due to which they also acquired male-like attributes such as firmness. Adler states that "aggressiveness, toughness, and a certain street wise self-sufficiency were just a few of the characteristics necessary for the black woman to shepherd her beleaguered flock of children, siblings, and consorts through the wastelands of educational, social financial and cultural deprivation." (Adler, 1975; p. 140-142). Adler further describes the variations in the pattern of women misconduct as a dubious side of liberation. In an interview with the *Newsweek* in 1975, Adler explained that women involved in violent crimes were "fighting not only for urban social change but also for sexual equality along with other women" (*Newsweek*, 1975, cited in Giordano, 1976; p. 4).

There is indeed increased attention given to the changes in the patterns of violation conducted by women. Similar to Adler, James and Thornton (1976) describe that the changes in the rate of crimes conducted by women could be attributed to the development of the feminist movement. For example, an article printed in *Nation* in 1974 outlined that female juvenile violent crimes had elevated by 388.3 percent between 1960 and 1972, in contrast to an increase of 203.2 percent in violent crimes perpetrated by boys. The article further sketched an interconnection between the feminist movement and violent crimes, stating that "the emergence of roughly half of the population from its role as the second sex – a movement very loosely summed up as women's liberation – coincides with some startling changes in the statistics of violent crime" (1974, p. 105).

Initially, Vedder and Sommerville were also assured that women criminality was related with women's liberation movement. They claimed:

> Girls are becoming more involved in aggressive antisocial behavior, fighting, stealing, and gang activities. Yet, it is understandable that as the social roles of boys and girls become more alike, their delinquent activities become less distinguishable from one another. The significant influence of the increasing emancipation of women and the proliferation of equal rights movements are both contributing factors in this change. (Vedder and Sommerville, 1970, p. 164).

Similar to the proclamation by Adler (1975) regarding black women, Vedder and Sommerville were also convinced that women took on more male-like attributes of aggressiveness and thus embraced illegal activities. This is in line with what Darrow (1922, p. 78) once explained that when women start dominating in the work place and politics that are initially controlled by men, it is unavoidable that the percentage of crimes committed by women will increase quickly. According to Adler (1975) this is because of the increased liberation of women, which permits them to be free from the standard patriarchal roles and limitations, and hence, they get involved in both legal and illegal activities similar to men. This proffers an important reason as to why women conduct violent crimes. As they became freer and secure the same

opportunities as men, they may undertake some illegal activities as a result of acquiring some male-like characteristics.

In contrast, Smart (1979) underlines another major reason behind women's use of violence. He argues that women's use of violence and crimes originates from their dissatisfaction with the absence of improvement in the role of women, and due to the lack of scientific evidence validating the concern that women held inferior status in society.

5.3. Women's Employment and Challenges to the Male Authority

A number of studies reveal that the greater job opportunities for women elevate the risk of male-perpetrated violence against women; due to the increased labour force participation of women in the sectors previously dominated by men as well as their enhanced contribution to the household results in challenging the masculine identities which eventually leads to violence by men (Connell, 2003, Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, Goode, 1971 and Hornung et al., 1981). They show that there is a direct connection between the husband's access to the financial resources, his household economic position, the reliability of his employment, and the risk of violence against the women. As some of the surveys presented in the previous section suggested, the very same factors can also lead to increased violence by women against men, especially when self-defence is considered.

Krishnan et al., (2010) articulates that while some attention has been paid to the study of women's employment as a medium of empowerment, relatively little attention has been given to the possibility for backlash as an outcome of changes in women's roles. For example, employed women are at more risk of being subjected to assault, as they are likely to challenge their husbands' power or because their husbands recognise it as a risk to their authority (Kimmel, 1995, Koenig et al., 2003, Rocca et al., 2009, Schuler et al., 1996 and Vyas and Watts, 2008).

Due to the swift changes in gender roles and relations, women can indeed experience backlash, including violence. For instance, qualitative and quantitative research in the U.S. and Africa demonstrate that female-initiated techniques to prevent HIV and

sexually transmitted infections may be regarded as permitting women "too much power" and lead men "to feel insecure or threatened" and to commit violence against their female partners (Mantell et al., 2006). A study in low-earning communities in Bangalore as well as in India also indicates that it is socially accepted for a husband to reprimand his wife if she was unable to meet family and social expectations and fail to accomplish her duties efficiently as mother and wife– for instance due to employment (cited in Krishnan et al., 2010).

This is not to disregard the numerous advantages women have experienced as their economic participation increased. Women's enhanced participation in the economic sector has increased their access to health care services, decreased fertility rates and improved children's education and nutrition. Likewise, increased employment opportunities for women decreases women's dependence on their husbands and escalate their authority within households and relationships, and thus reduce their susceptibility to domestic violence (Vyas and Watts, 2008).

5.4. Role of education

Some researchers also establish a connection between increase in the level of education of women and domestic violence. Abdul-Ghani (2014), for example, argues that education has a pivotal role to be played in the changing perspective on the role of women in the modern society. Economic, governmental and cultural factors shape an individual's character and rationality. Hence, women's socio-economic position becomes prominent, as education is a key to awareness.

Education is termed as a basic right for every human being in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many international organisations and specialised agencies of the United Nations also refer to the rights-based characteristic of the concept. UNESCO's constitution, for example, asserts that educational opportunity should be made equal for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, and economic or social status (Article 1, Para 2 b, UNESCO Constitution).

Although education is acknowledged as basic human right, there are studies that suggest that increase in women's education can indirectly lead to an increase in

domestic violence. It is claimed that increase in the level of women's education can lead to the use of violence in conjunction with other key societal variables (Marium, 2014). For instance, a research study showed that women in India were subjected to sexual and domestic violence as they disagreed with the authoritative nature of their husbands (Bhatla, Duvvury and Chakraborty, 2010). These women were exposed to punishment even when they stepped out of their houses without the permission of their husbands. Bhatla, who is a researcher in the International Centre for Research on Women, argues that this is because men's strength is measured in the Indian community in terms of the way (and to the extent) men control their wives, and therefore based on their understanding of masculinity. (Bhatla, Duvvury and Chakraborty, 2010).

Thus, societal factors play an important role in the effect one's education has on domestic violence. According to Jewkes (2002, p. 1425), "High levels of female empowerment seem to be protective against intimate partner violence, but power can be derived from many sources such as education, income, and community roles and not all of these convey equal protection or do so in a direct manner." A number of studies however have found that high educational attainment of women is related to levels of violence, with similar findings also found for men (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 2017; McCall and Shields, 1986; Okun, 1986; Martin et al., 1999). Therefore, education does not cause violence against women directly, but rather indirectly – as women become empowered, this is seen as a threat to the authority of men, who may be inclined to use violence against women to maintain their control. However, as pointed out, it is important to consider societal factors as well.

5.5. Adler's Liberation Theory

According to Adler (1973, p. 13), the liberation movement can be credited for advancement in the change of women's status in a number of areas, such as marriage, family, employment and social position. Adler argues that women already held the same aspirations as men prior to the liberation movement; however, they lacked the power to be able to achieve their goals through legitimate means. Previously women had to seek status through men, thereby conforming to the values ascribed to

femininity by men. Women's liberation changed the limitations on women's behaviour and the opportunities women had. "Medical, educational, economic, political, and technological advances have freed women from unwanted pregnancies, provided them with male occupational skills, and equalised their strength with weapons" (Adler, 1975, p. 10).

Even though liberation provided a number of gains for women, Adler (1975, p. 13) observed a "darker side" of the movement. According to Adler (1975) with increasing opportunities for women in education and employment, there were also increasing opportunities for women in committing criminal activities. Women obtained a number of occupations, for example they became doctors, lawyers and soldiers, and at the same time, they also became burglars, forgers and embezzlers (Adler, 1975b; p. 42; Adler, 1977; p. 102; Klemesrud, 1978; p. 24). According to Adler, women were no longer confined to low-level crimes such as domestic violence, but also had access to high-level crimes that provided higher rewards.

Adler's liberation theory (or thesis) rejects the biological and psychological theories developed by prior criminologists. Adler believed that these theories did not adequately explain the nature of and the reasons for female criminality. Although Adler did agree to a small number of differences between men and women, she maintained that social forces had a substantial impact on human behaviour. Adler stressed that "of all the differences between the sexes, only four – size, strength, aggression, and dominance – have been implicated in any way with the overrepresentation of males in the criminal system. The first two are biologically givens; the other two are largely, if not entirely socially learned" (Adler, 1975; p. 43).

For Adler, gender roles are institutionalised through the socialisation process. Social structures and a system of rewards and punishments shape children into their respective gender roles. Where boys are given mechanical toys, and encouraged to be aggressive and tough, girls are treated in a soft manner. Furthermore, the reinforcement of gender roles is further solidified as a result of the already existing societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. For Adler, such social factors are

more important in understanding the criminal activities by women than any biological differences that exist between the genders.

Adler claimed that women's liberation could create structural opportunities for women in committing certain crimes, such as embezzlement in the workplace (Adler, 1977, p. 103). Additionally, by having access to the workplace, women could also compete with men, which meant that women could adopt more masculine characteristics, such as assertiveness, aggressiveness and risk taking. Adler was, therefore, of the opinion that the number of women offenders would increase as women acquired new skills and masculine traits, thanks to an increasing access to new employment opportunities. She noted that while some women "are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavour, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes" (Adler, 1975; p. 13). Therefore, she suggested that the more the position of women in society became equal to that of men, the more women's offending behaviour would equal that of men (Adler, 1977, p. 102).

Thus, for Adler, the women's liberation movement had a direct influence on women's involvement in crime. In the same vein, feminist women or women that hold favourable attitudes towards feminism are similarly considered to have a higher propensity to commit crime than those that hold more traditional attitudes (Klien, 1973; Pollak, 1950). Similarly, Vedder and Sommerville suggested that during the liberation movement, girls became more involved in aggressive anti-social behaviour such as fighting and stealing that their crimes became less distinguishable than those of boys. The increasing emancipation of women as a result of the women's liberation movement was a significant contributing factor to these changes (Vedder and Sommerville, 1970, p. 164).

Adler believed that opportunity and accessibility, which were the basis of crimes committed by women, were inherent in a number of situations. These situations in turn are mainly influenced by the socio-economic status of women (Adler, 2002, 1975). It is also noted that women could compensate their lack of strength by using a weapon (Adler, 2002, 1975) or poisoning the victim (Roberts, 1993; Leonard, 1982;

Heidensohn, 1995; Hickey, 2002; Richie, Tsenin, and Widom, 2000; Nagel and Johnson, 1994; Pollak, 1950; Adler and Simon, 1979).

Liberation theory provides limited insights in the Saudi Arabian context, as female perpetrated violence is more related to the constraints of the patriarchal system and the frustration women face in Saudi Arabia, rather than the Saudi women adopting masculine characteristics. This is further supported by Pike (1876), Adler (1975), Klien (1973) and Pollak (1950), who claim that the total volume of female crime has increased as a result of the progressive emancipation of women in the society, which can be easily considered as a challenge to the patriarchal system. It can also be argued in the Saudi context that women's pursuit of their rights in general, and their right to education and right to engage in a paid work in particular, creates certain challenges to the patriarchal system. The confrontation women may face from their family members as they pursue some of these rights may indeed cause frustration and lead some women to use violence to achieve their goals or to seek retaliation when challenged violently.

5.6. Criticism of the Liberation Theory

The causality attributed to the Liberation movement in considering the female criminal activities has met with many criticisms and prompted many to study further the exact correlation between these two. While some of these studies questioned whether the women who conducted felony identified their actions with or felt free as a result of the women's liberation movement, others identified other variables that affect the female criminality.

Criticisms generally involved that liberation theory was not based on factual grounds. Prior factual evidence held in United States was unable to support the liberation theory. The research since the time of the movement demonstrated very little change in female apprehension for most types of violence. For example, between 1960 and 1975, the arrest figures in the United States indicated that the gender gap was narrow for offences such as robbery but was extensive for crimes such as assault, while no change in gender gap was seen for homicide and simple assault (Steffensmeier and Cobb, 1981). Moreover, O'Brien (1999) examined the arrest trends from 1960 and

1995 and discovered that the gender gap for homicide broadened, while the gender gap for robbery narrowed at a very low rate of change.

Many have studied the change in the female offender behaviour and the enforcement system in the U.S. context (Goodkind, Wallace, Shook, Bachman, and O'Malley, 2009; Schwartz, Steffensmeier, and Feldmeyer, 2009; Schwartz, Steffensmeier, Zhong, and Ackerman, 2009; Steffensmeier et al., 2005). Some have focused on the administration of justice, and how it might have influenced the gender gap in criminality. For example, Steffensmeier and Schwartz (2004) argued that because of better administration of justice, female outlaws became more visible to law enforcement, thus more susceptible to be seized as an outcome of large attention given to minor crimes. These empirical studies pointed out that female crime for more serious and injury causing activities and violence has been less compared to that of less harmful offence regardless of the time period and social context (Steffensmeier, Zhong, Ackerman, Schwartz, and Agha, 2006). Nevertheless, the debate on the female criminal behavioural change has revived once again because of the increasing trends in female attacks (Kruttschnitt, 2013).

6. Self- Defence

LaFave and Scott (1972, cited in Crocker, 1985) state that self-defence is based on the principle that the person who was illegally assaulted by another can take reasonable steps to defend him or herself. Moriarty (2005) elucidates self-defence by taking into account anticipatory self-defence (ASD) that could be practiced when a battered woman murders her violator in a non-traditional way of self-defence. Meanwhile, Wake (2013) argues that such a defence would avoid the problems related to requiring the abused woman to build a loss of self-control and/or sustaining an affirmative defence in "startled householder" issues.

United States is one of those countries where the rate of homicide committed by women has increased since the 1980s (Browne, 1987; Campbell, 1992). Previous research on the issue was based upon sexual stereotypes or the view of women as mentally-demented or diseased. Present research underlines that female-initiated intimate homicides are due to their background of violation within the family as well

as acts of self-defence preventing themselves from any danger to their lives. Studies depict that male sufferers commence the homicidal conduct with threats of or actual physical violence (Chimbos, 1978; Jurik and Winn, 1990; Willbanks, 1983; Wolfgang, 1958).

Mostly, women do not commit murder but if they do it is merely for self-defence purposes. An account of police records on spousal homicides in Canada showed that in the majority of the cases, women were battered before committing the murder (Chimbos, 1978). Likewise, Totman (1978) examined the female convicts in a Californian state prison and found that 29 of the 30 women who were convicted of murdering their partners had been violated by their husbands. Campbell (1992)'s study also showed that 79 percent of the male victims of the female-perpetrated homicides were either present or ex-husbands or boyfriends, who had beaten their female partners. Only three women had killed their partners without being beaten, abused, and violated by a male or without receiving any threat of violence.

In order to understand the circumstances of the convicted women that result in the death or serious harm of their male partners, Grant (1995) interviewed 13 women aged between 26 and 65, who were sentenced for murdering their close partners. According to the women, the reason was for self-defence. The women were under the belief that their own lives were in danger because of the threats of death they received from their partners.

Other studies support this finding (Browne, 1987; Daly and Wilson, 1988; Willbanks, 1983). Polk (2016) analysed 12 incidents and concluded that 8 out of 12 murdered their sexual partners in reaction to an assault. Browne (1987) also drew a contrast between 42 battered women who man slaughtered their partners to 205 assaulted women who did not commit murdering order to deduce risk factors. Browne devised a semi-structured questionnaire, and analysed the police reports, hospital accounts, as well as witness statements. She found out that the women who carried out homicide had experienced repeated and injurious assault from their partners who were either drunk, under the influence of drugs, sexually violating the women or threatening to murder them.

O'Keefe (1997) studied the differences between the battered women imprisoned for murder or seriously injuring their perpetrator with those imprisoned for other offenses in California Correctional Institutions. Based on a survey of 50 women sentenced for homicide or serious violence, and 26 women sentenced for non-violent offences, the study found that regardless of their crime women had all been subjected to crucial physical wounds and approximately 50 percent of them had been violated in their childhood. The battered women sentenced for murder or seriously injuring their partners tended to be older, were in a long-term relationship and encountered more repeated, severe beating, and a longer period of violence from their male partners. These women also believed their lives were at stake. It needs to be noted that eighty percent of women who committed homicide had no previous criminal record. Serran and Firestone (2004) argue that in cases where women kill their partners; it is the victim that initiates the violence, suggesting women kill mostly in self-defence (Jurik and Winn, 1990).

There are also other factors that facilitate the female-perpetrated violence in a patriarchal society. For one, battered women hardly have a reason to assume that the criminal justice system will defend them. Women are concerned that they would be unjustly treated and denied equal rights because of the male-dominated criminal justice system. Constitution condones wife-beating and control, and men are consequently provided with more power than women in relationships. This leaves women defenceless in front of men. In a patriarchal system, women think that the law that was made to safeguard their rights are now opposing them and apprehend women who are already victims of assault (Toole, 2012).

As presented, numerous researches have relied on the theory of self-defence to explain female-perpetrated domestic violence. This research will also benefit from this theory in exploring the case of the Saudi women imprisoned for killing or injuring their husbands or guardians. According to Toole (2012), it is a fact that in numerous events, Saudi women use assault for protection from physical abuse from their family members and husbands. Nonetheless, in Saudi Arabia women live in a severe patriarchal system and therefore, the events of female-perpetrated domestic violence are much more complicated to be described solely by the theory of self-defence that

rely on LaFave and Scott's (1972, cited in Crocker, 1985) premise. The difficulty lies in the context of what should be perceived from 'violence'. Evidently, a woman protecting herself from the physical abuse of her husband or family member can be seen as acting in self-defence. However, it is difficult to consider a woman's assault against her husband who denies her rights with as an act of self-defence unless that denial is itself described as an act of violence. Hence, the question of self-defence is not that straightforward, and it pertains to the meaning attributed to the prior attack and/or violence against women.

As per Tønnessen (2016) male guardianship system is so authoritative and abusive that it is rendered as domestic violence, as it is in the case of polygamy. Because of the refusal of women's rights, Saudi women are subjected to physical and mental suffering (Tønnessen, 2016). Many women do not respond with assault frustrated with the limitations they face as a result of the patriarchal system. Moreover, an increased opportunity for education also plays a role in the rise of female-perpetrated violence. As the liberation theory suggests, education reforms one's worldview and produces desire for emancipation which will also be taken into consideration in explaining women's use of assault against their guardians in Saudi Arabia.

7. Why Liberation and Self-Defence Theories

In this section, the rationale behind the use of liberation and self-defence theories is discussed. There are number of other theories for female criminality, such as marginalisazation theory (Chesney-Lind, 1986), however, there are some questions with regards to the relevance of this theory for the purpose of this research.

According to the marginalzation theory, the main cause of female crime is based on their lower position in society; when women are not allowed to fulfil their social and professional aspirations (Chesney-Lind and Eliason, 2006). Additionally, victimisation also plays an important role in the theory, with its main component being violence suffered by women from men. Therefore, the central premise of this theory is that marginality (having a low salary, inadequate jobs and lower-class position) and victimisation instigate women to commit crimes. Whilst there are some elements of

the theory that seem applicable to the context of Saudi Arabia, marginalisation is not something faced by the majority of Saudi women.

A wealth of information is available on Arab and Muslim women, however, literature specific to Saudi women is often lacking. Based on what literature exists, it is commonly concluded that Saudi women are among the most oppressed and marginalised when compared with other Arab countries. As a Saudi woman, I would disagree with such conclusions. Whilst it is true that there are some opportunities that are not available to Saudi women, and the general condition of women can be improved, Saudi women do have access to opportunities that other women may not. For example, Saudi women have the opportunity to study abroad through government scholarships. According to Bradley (2015, p XV), "Contrary to the temptation of ideologues of all kinds to see or portray the country as monochromatic or uniform in thought and belief […] there is no single culture that defines what Saudi Arabia is and who its people are, just as there is no single culture that alone could be said to define what the United States is and what Americans are." It is important therefore to have a nuanced understanding of Saudi Arabia in general, and Saudi women in particular, especially when understanding the power dynamics of Saudi women. Altorki (1986), for example, states that there are number of ways Saudi women can gain power mainly through their family, materials and financial contribution. Altorki (1986) was also of the opinion that women are increasingly asserting their property rights. Political power for Saudi women, according to Altorki (1986) comes from aspects such as control of domestic life and the role women play in arranging marriages, something which is of economic and social significance to Saudi society. This is not to say that the power women have in the Saudi society is greater than that of men; men still hold substantial power mainly due to the prevalence of the guardianship system. However, what it does mean is that it cannot simply be concluded that women in Saudi Arabia are marginalized. It may be a reality for some women in Saudi Arabia especially in the rural areas of the Kingdom, however, for the majority this conclusion is a little far-fetched. According to Arebi (1994, p. 4), Saudi Arabia may have developed a reputation of being very restrictive to women, however, Saudi women are still able to produce and change culture through literature. According to Akers, Bagader and

Heinrichsdorff (1998, p. 15), "The profile of the Saudi Arabian woman is changing considerably as more women pursue a higher education and join the work force. An educated wife is considered more desirable, as young working men show a preference for brides who can contribute to the household income. Young women, on the other hand, are not only asking for the right to work in their marriage contracts, but also for households separate from their husbands' families. Both of these changes will strengthen the position of Saudi women, giving them higher status in their households and more control over their lives."

Against this backdrop, it is important to study why women commit violence against men using liberation theory, however, not in the same context as that suggested by Adler. Adler's liberation theory is mainly derived from the experiences of women in the Western world. There are currently no studies in the Arab countries that investigate the relationship between liberation and the use of violence by women. It is argued that liberation, in the context of Saudi Arabia especially is different to that presented by Adler. According to Adler, there is a direct correlation between women's emancipation and liberation, and their use of violence by taking on more masculine characteristics, such as hard-headedness and stubbornness. However, in the context of Saudi Arabia, liberation has a different characteristic; rather than adopting masculine traits, it is more related to resistance to the patriarchal structure of the Saudi society. In a way, within the Saudi context, it is important to account for Merton and Merton's (1968) assertion that criminality can be caused by stress or tension. The main source of this tension, according to Merton and Merton (1968) is the obstacles that are placed in the way of attainting certain goals. Individuals therefore are frustrated with such obstacles, and in turn commits crimes to either release such tensions or achieve their goals using illegal means (Merton and Merton, 1968).

Thus, education and employment in this context empower Saudi women to be aware and understand their rights and equips them with tools in order to demand these rights. As noted earlier, in Section 4.3 and 4.4 of this chapter, education and employment are indirectly linked with domestic violence. In the Saudi context therefore, women pursuing their right to control their own lives and in particular, rights such as the right to an education and the right to engage in paid work create

challenges to the patriarchal system. Therefore, it follows that when Saudi women demand that they are allowed to actively participate in the Kingdom's workforce and seek employment, due to the prevalence of patriarchal norms in Saudi society, many of these women may not be granted permission to seek employment by their guardians especially if the guardian prefers a woman to take on more traditional gender roles, such as that of a house wife. When faced with such patriarchal obstacles, Saudi women may become frustrated with their status in society, and this could potentially lead to violence against their guardian. In using liberation theory, this thesis attempts to analyse whether there is a direct link between increased emancipation of Saudi women and their use of violence as suggested by Adler, or that the link between increased emancipation and use of violence by Saudi women is indirect and needs to be understood against the backdrop of the patriarchal system prevalent in the Kingdom. Therefore, this study, in analysing exactly this relationship can enhance our understanding of liberation theory and the use of violence especially in the context of a Muslim and Arab country. It must be noted however, that not all types of violence by women will be explained by liberation theory. It is therefore important that an alternative theory to capture the experience of women who have committed violence is also used. The second theory used by the study is therefore the Self-Defence theory as discussed in Section 5 of this Chapter.

As noted in section 5, the question of self-defence is less clear. The answer, to some extent, depends on how domestic violence might be defined in the context of Saudi society. There is support for the idea that guardianship and polygamy are examples of domestic violence and therefore, female offenders are often acting in self-defence beyond the simple sense of protecting themselves from physical attack. According to DeKeseredy (2011), acts of physical violence against women prevails as a result of deep-rooted socio-cultural understanding of gender, and the correspondingly prescribed roles and responsibilities. According to Dalal et al., (2012), a male dominated society provides a foundation for violence against women. Given this, there is a possibility of explaining women's use of violence as an act of self-defence in Saudi Arabia. The self-defence explanation may be applied in these circumstances, but the study here suggests that tensions between liberation and patriarchy are also

involved, but in a different way. Findings presented in Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis shed further light on this.

The foregoing argument suggests that the liberation theory can explain Saudi women's violence, but only through its interaction with Saudi patriarchal practices, and not how it is posited by Adler. The tension between Saudi women's pursuit of greater freedom and the frustrating effect of guardianship, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, polygamy, is evident in the context of women's education and employment. Educated Saudi women enjoy a greater awareness of their human rights and working Saudi women are empowered by greater financial independence. The denial and frustration of liberty in these terms seem a likely trigger of women's violent responses which are of concern in this study. On the other hand, given the conservative nature of the Kingdom, as discussed in Chapter 2, violence committed by women who are uneducated could be explained using self-defence theory.

8. Female-Perpetrated Domestic Violence in Saudi Arabia

There have only been a few notable studies that assessed why women commit domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. These studies mainly cite self-defence as the reason, where women's use of violence is a result of being subjected to domestic violence by their spouse or guardian.

A study by Alquaiz (2017) which also looked at the social factors associated with the domestic violence committed by the Saudi women found that the majority of the women convicted of the crime were under emotional and moral distress, had lost one or both of their parents, were treated extremely badly by their guardians, who also prevented them from making personal choices such as seeking education and work. Additionally, the study also found that most of these women had been married at a very young age, and some were forced into marriage and into polygamy. As a result, many of these women had a bad relationship with their husbands. Similarly, a study by Al-Khashab (1983) also noted that the majority of the women in the sample committed domestic violence against their husbands in self-defence and due to being forced into polygamy.

Albeit insightful, the studies on women's use of violence in Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world have mostly been descriptive in nature, and mainly aimed at identifying the reasons behind the use of violence by women. These studies failed in situating the reasons for the use of violence by women within the social context in which Arab women live and face on a daily basis. Past studies have also not considered various theories in explaining the use of violence by women in the Arab world. **As this study aims at understanding the extent to which liberation theory and self-defence theories explain violence by women in Saudi Arabia, it addresses this gap in the literature regarding Saudi Arabia**. Liberation theory provides useful insights in explaining female-perpetrated violence in Saudi Arabia; however, more emphasis needs to be placed on the challenges of the patriarchal system faced by women, rather than the male characteristics adopted by them. It can also be argued that the attempts of the women to control their lives, and their pursuit of education and employment rights pose challenges to the patriarchal system.

9. Conclusion

There is an increased use of violence by women in the domestic setting. This increase has also been reported in Saudi Arabia. A number of studies have looked at the reasons for why women commit violence against men and have identified a number of factors. These include the use of violence for the purpose of self-defence, retribution, the use of alcohol and drugs, unemployment, fear, and violence against children. Studies in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries note that the main reasons for the use of violence are mostly societal, for example being in a polygamous relationship, controlling behaviour of men under the guardianship system, and being subjected to abuse and mistreatment. Additionally, increased emancipation and liberation of women has also been associated with an increase in the use of violence by women against men, however, this needs to be understood more in the context of the patriarchal norms in Saudi Arabia, than simply women taking on more masculine characteristics as suggested by Adler's liberation theory.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

1. **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology used to carry out the research. After a discussion on the choice of research approach (section 2), the following pages of this chapter presents the data collection technique (section 4), the sampling procedure, along with ethical considerations in sampling, the characteristics of the participants, the interview setting, and the questions directed to the participants (section 3).

1.1.   **Research Aims and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors leading women to use violence against men (especially against their husbands and guardians, particularly their father, brother and sometimes son) in Saudi Arabia. The study centres on the following research questions:

1. What motivates women to commit acts of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia?

2. What are the roles of patriarchal constraints, emancipatory longings and self-defence in driving these acts of violence?

3. How and to what extent do theories of liberation and self-defence explain the motives of domestic violence perpetrated by females in Saudi Arabia?

In order to help answering these research questions, the following research objectives were set.

1. Study the relationship between patriarchy (guardianship, polygamy), female emancipation (education and employment), and female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

2. Examine the explanatory value of the existing theoretical accounts (theories of liberation and self-defence) in female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

2. Research Approaches

This research uses an explanatory study design to explain the causal mechanism behind committing the acts of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. The research seeks to understand and explain in depth why women in Saudi Arabia commit domestic violence offences against men in their household. The main emphasis here is to understand the reasons that lead women to commit such offences. When using the explanatory research, the researcher goes beyond merely describing the characteristics to analyse and explain why or how the phenomena under study takes place in order to have a clearer view of the relationships (Collis and Hussey, 2013). The research follows a qualitative approach in order to capture female participants' accounts of the incidents and to clearly depict their own experiences and motivation for using domestic violence against men in their households.

2.1. Research Philosophy

As mentioned previously, this research is underpinned by the feminist perspective. Therefore, the main subjects of this study are women, who have been incarcerated for committing acts of domestic violence against their guardians. Considerable debate has taken place about what feminist research actually means (Harding, 1986; Klein, 1983; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Earlier descriptions of the feminist research portray it as a research that is conducted by women, for women and about women, and as a research that will lead to some form of social change. The feminist approach is important for this study to note experiences of women convicted for domestic violence against men in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially in the context of the prevalence of the patriarchal norms in the Kingdom.

According to Brayton (1997), feminist research is distinct from the traditional research in three ways. Firstly, it seeks to remove the power imbalance between the research and its subjects; secondly, it is politically motivated and intends to play a major role in changing social inequality; and lastly, the starting point of this research is based on standpoints and experiences of women. According to Klein (1983), feminist research also embraces the perspective that women's experiences, ideas and needs, however different they may be, are valid in their own right. Klein (1983) also argues that

feminist research should embrace the philosophy and the object of the study. Essentially, Klein (1983) is of the opinion that feminist perspective should be used in all stages of the research, from determining the research questions to the distribution of research findings. However, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) argue that no research method can be said to be distinctly feminist, that is, the adoption of the feminist research does not involve any specific methods that should or should not be used during the course of research. The distinction in feminist research however comes from the political positioning of theory, epistemology, and ethics that enable the researcher to question the existing "truths" and explore relations between power and knowledge (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; p. 16).

In contrast to positivism, a fundamental tenant of the feminist research is that science is not value-free (Eichler, 1991, p. 13). Feminist researchers, therefore, those who conduct research are also shaped by their culture, society, politics, and various social phenomena. Feminist researchers argue that humans play an active part in the production of knowledge, and that the experiences and beliefs of the researcher, as well as the specific context in which the research takes place will have an influence on the way researchers conduct their research and hence the way they produce knowledge (Cope, 2002). This means that social contexts will inescapably affect the questions being asked, the approach taken to answer them, and the interpretations of the subsequent findings Du Bois (1979). To put it differently, the researcher's social identity and position influences the research's findings and/or knowledge, which raises questions with regard to the objectivity. As a result, from a feminist perspective, no research can be considered value-free or purely objective. Thus, the presumptions and the context of the researcher should be made clear, so the readers are aware of the circumstances in which the research was carried out (Bowles, Duelli and Klien, 1983).

According to Beasley (1999) feminism is not one theory but consists of many various flexible viewpoints. Similarly, Ramazanoglu and Holland argue that feminists can have different ontologies and epistemologies, meaning that it is possible for some feminist researchers to align themselves with positivism, while some can undertake a more postmodernist stance. Generally, however, feminist researchers tend to follow a more

interpretivist approach, which seeks to understand and explain a phenomenon rather than rationalise it (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). While there is no single feminist method within the feminist research, it is possible to employ various methods that fit the particular research in question. Yet, according to Klein (1983), feminist research should consider facts and feelings, both obvious and those hidden, behaviours and attitudes, and avoid removing the context of the research from data and findings. Cope (2002) asserts that "[r]ather than searching for universal statements that apply everywhere to everyone (and therefore really apply nowhere and to no one), it would be better for us to acknowledge the biases, perspectives, and contextual factors such as political systems and cultural values inherent in the research project and move forward from that point" (Cope, 2002; p. 48).

As mentioned earlier, the main aim of this study is to understand and explain why women in Saudi Arabia commit domestic violence against men in their household. The study looks to understand the experience of such women, which fits the objectives of the feminist research. The present study also applies a feminist approach in considering the role of the prevalent patriarchal traditions in Saudi Arabia. Patriarchal practices, such as guardianship, are a significant impediment for women in Saudi Arabia, and as such are very relevant for this study in the way they influence female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. It is important therefore, that women that have been involved in domestic violence offences are allowed to speak for themselves and provide their views and feelings regarding the offence. This would be something that is highly unlikely in a patriarchal system in Saudi Arabia, but in order to understand the circumstances and reasons behind women's acts of violence, it is very important.

2.2.   Qualitative Research

Domestic violence has been studied in a number of ways and/or methods by a number of scholars (for example see Felson and Pare, 2008; Khosravizadegan et al., 2008; Putit, 2008; Soltanifar, Behnam and Hoseini, 2008; Etter and Birzer, 2007). It is evident from such studies, that the qualitative approach provides a suitable venue to understand this phenomenon. According to Collis and Hussey (2013), a qualitative

approach allows the researcher to study the experiences of the participants as described by them, and at the same time provides the researcher a subjective experience of the participants as well. Qualitative research in this regard provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that is investigated. This is contrary to the quantitative study, which seeks to fix and measure the reality, and focuses on uncovering facts (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

Qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand the meaning participants ascribe to events (Yin, 2013). This is very important, especially for the purposes of this study, as it provides a way to understand the experiences and the context of the women who committed acts of domestic violence against men. Additionally, qualitative research allows for deeper description of the data that is gathered, often verbally, which can be presented in a detailed and complete fashion. Therefore, the focus of the qualitative research is on the subject in its entirety (Bryman, 2015).

For the purposes of this research, the qualitative method was considered a more suitable and also practical way to understand the experiences of participants who engaged in domestic violence against their male members of the household. The research utilises the accounts of women, who have been imprisoned following domestic violence-related offences, as the primary source of data. As Espinosa and Osborne (2002) notes, domestic violence is a phenomenon that is not straightforwardly quantified. Likewise, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest qualitative methodology for an in-depth analysis and to capture the depth and also the richness of the women's responses.

Some studies on domestic abuse have conducted a quantitative approach in their analysis of data (Albrithen, 2006; Jahanfar and Malekzadegan, 2007; Etter and Birzer, 2007; Ozgenturk, 2009; Othman and Adenan, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2017; Arroyo et al., 2017). These attempts have been made to investigate phenomena that are measurable, such as the frequency and type of domestic violence offences committed or in studying the trends in domestic violence and associated mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. The present study did not employ this approach, as it would not allow for capturing the meanings attributed to

the issue that is examined by this study. Qualitative research is an approach which generates findings by meanings rather than quantifiable statistical procedures (Bryman, 2015). In regard to the nature of this study, Maynard (1994) notes that qualitative research is considered superior to quantitative methods when researching sensitive issues such as the personal experiences of domestic violence offenders, especially when domestic violence is committed against men.

Quantitative measures can sometimes supplement and even enhance qualitative analysis (Marican, 2006); however, for this particular study, this mixed method approach is also not suitable mainly due to the lack of the secondary data available on female violence against men in the Saudi Arabia. While the present dissertation benefits from the statistical data presented by a number of previous studies, it does not seek measure the prevalence of the female-perpetrated domestic violence against men in Saudi Arabia but explain the reasons behind it. Furthermore, undertaking a quantitative survey was also difficult, mainly due to small sample size of the participants, and the difficulty in accessing these participants.

3. Sampling

This study utilises *purposive sampling* approach. This strategy is often used in interviews with specific groups of people in applied social research. P*urposive sampling* provides the researcher with more opportunity to fully understand the participants (Polit and Beck, 2004). *Purposive sampling* does this by providing a framework for an in-depth understanding of the meaning the respondents attribute to their authentic experiences related to the domestic violence against their husbands and guardians (Perryman, 2016). P*urposive sampling* was thus important for this research, as it allowed the researcher to specifically examine the women convicted for domestic violence against their guardians: those who have struggled with polygamy as well as those seeking liberation - for education or employment.

A sample of 30 participants from a total of 150 convicted females who committed domestic violence against their guardians (male members of the household) was selected. These are the women who have directly experienced and struggled with a highly patriarchal system and have an understanding of the domestic violence issue

as perpetrators. In order to select the participants for this study, help was sought from the social worker working at the prison. The social worker provided access to the files of all inmates that had been convicted of committing violence against men. A number of selection criteria were drawn in order to select the participants for the interview:

- Women who had committed acts of domestic violence against their guardians

- Being currently in prison

- Education Level – It was important to have participants that represented different levels of education, from no formal education to postgraduate education.

- Employment Status – It was important to have a diverse range in terms of the employment status of the participants

- Polygamy – Not all married women would have been in a polygamous relationship; therefore, it was important to have this as a separate criterion to ensure the sample included some participants that were in a polygamous marriage.

The sample did not include men who are victims or perpetrators of domestic violence, as this study focuses on the experiences of the convicts of domestic violence against their guardians. There are already many studies that focus on men's lives and domestic violence by men (see for example Chesney-Lind, 2007; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). In addition, the researcher did not seek to compare between the male and female convicts; rather, the comparison was made between those women, who are educated and employed, and those who are not, and how such social characteristics affect their behaviour.

The sample size of the interview was 30. In qualitative studies, there is no definite number of how many respondents need to be interviewed. Baker, Edwards and Doidge (2012), for instance, suggested that the number of respondents could be between 5 and 60. Mason (2010) reviewed 560 interview-based qualitative doctoral theses in the UK and Ireland and found that the mean sample size was 31, and the

most common sample sizes were 20 and 30. The sample size of 30 compared to previous research studies that use qualitative approach is therefore sufficient for a qualitative Ph.D. study. More importantly, the sample size of my study was guided by the concept of data saturation, which is a well-accepted approach to ensure the depth of inquiry (Mason 2010). The process of data saturation involves a judgement on deciding a point at which no new information can be obtained by interviewing more respondents. During the fieldwork, at the time of completing the interview 25, I realised that the responses were very similar to the previous two interviews. I continued to conduct another 3 interviews in order to ensure that no new data arose. It is argued that data saturation sometimes cannot be truly reached in practice with data that are potentially limitless because of respondents' different life experiences (Bryman, 2015). Indeed, it was easier to notice when some data achieved saturation such as the attitudes towards traditional patriarchal practices. Other data such as motivations for undertaking domestic violence achieved saturation until the very end stage of the data collection process.

4. Ethical Consideration

The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Nottingham Trent University, and permission to interview participants was also sought from the Ministry of Local Affairs in Saudi Arabia. Ethical approval was sought prior to the commencement of the data collection phase of the research.

According to Nickel (2006), extra care and attention is required for conducting research that involves vulnerable groups of people, as was the case in this study. The main ethical concerns during studies of this nature, where participants involved are convicts and vulnerable, are anonymity and confidentiality. The main guide for the ethical considerations regarding this study was the statement of ethical practice, issued by the British Sociological Association (2002). Participation in this study was purely voluntary. All participants that were recruited during the interviewing process were provided clear guidance as to the purpose of the study and how the information gathered would be used. Participants were also informed about the research procedures and ensured that their identity would be kept anonymous when reporting

the results. During the interviews, special attention was paid to ensure that the participants had full consent. Participation information sheet and consent forms were used for this purpose. Prior to the interview, respondents were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain the reason for their withdrawal.

Being incarcerated, the participants were particularly vulnerable. Practically, for example, any lack of remorse shown by a participant for the crime she committed, should it come to the attention of the authorities, might impact on the length of sentence and her treatment by the authorities. Thus, the anonymity of the study was an important feature to maintain and to emphasise to the participants. To assure the participants of their anonymity, participants were also informed that any information that could be heard by any other person during the interview process (such as a guard) would also remain confidential. Assurances regarding this were sought from the Ministry of Justice in Saudi Arabia, and the Prison Governor, and guards near the interview area were required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Participants were also informed about instances where anonymity could not be assured. This included circumstances where any information disclosed to the researcher by the participant gave the researcher good reason to believe that the participant might be at risk of significant harm or posed a risk of harm to others due to their actions, or revealed information about any offences that the authorities were not previously aware of.

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were digitally recorded, with handwritten records transcribed in verbatim form. When the presenting the results of and the excerpts from the interviews, the actual names of the participants were replaced with fake names to ensure anonymity.

The researcher strictly adhered to the policies of the Saudi Authorities when interviewing the convicted women to ensure the safety of both the participants and the researcher.

The interviews were conducted in a safe and secure environment within the prison. An office space was provided by the prison authorities and participants were accompanied to and from the office by a security guard. The office space allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely. However, to guarantee the interviewer's safety, two female security guards and a social worker were stationed outside the interview room in case of any emergency.

In an attempt to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible, the researcher started with a friendly chat with them. This was intended to avert any uncomfortable feeling, such as vulnerability, that would dominate the interview, had the research directly started the interview session. Therefore, the interviews became more relaxed as the respondents and the researcher became familiar with each other. Once the interview process for all participants was completed, the participants were contacted again to check their well-being and ask if they had any concerns or possible distress. None of the participants reported any concerns or possible distress after the interviews.

5. Access

After the ethical approval was obtained from Nottingham Trent University, as well as permission from the King Saud University, and the Ministry of Local Affairs in KSA, an initial visit to the Ministry of Justice was paid to inquire about the main prison where female criminals were kept in Saudi Arabia—which was the Prison of Riyadh. Once permission to access to the Prison of Riyadh was obtained, the next step was to contact the manager of the prison and ask for the files of the prisoners who were convicted solely for domestic violence against men.

The Prison of Riyadh ensured success in having access to the women that were convicted for domestic violence against men. It is the largest and the main prison in Saudi Arabia, and all the female offenders are transferred here from all parts and cities of Saudi Arabia. The Riyadh prison also has the largest number of female offenders (3,700) who have committed various crimes ranging from moral crimes such as adultery, to violent crimes such as murder (Alharbi et al., 2014).

6. Interviews

Interviews with 30 female prisoners were carried out between October 2014 and December 2014. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and were conducted in a safe and secure environment, which allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely. To ensure the safety of the interviewer, there was a security guard stationed outside the interview room. However, no incidence of violence or aggression was experienced. All interviews were digitally recorded, and notes were taken with the permission of the participants. All interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, which is also the researcher's native language. The interviews were then translated into English for analysis.

The breakdown of the respondents based on the four selection criteria presented above has produced a diverse sample of mixed categories (see Table 1 below).

- Diverse range of education levels (master's, bachelor's, secondary school, primary school, and never educated).

- Diverse range and types of employment backgrounds (teacher, banker, businesswoman, cleaner, and unemployed).

- Varied household compositions) polygamy, monogamy, never married, and divorce).

The respondents belonged to a mixture of all categories.

7. Data Collection

Within the qualitative method, the emphasis is generally on the importance of trying to "get inside" (Bryman, 2015) and appreciate the lives of the participants, usually by asking in-depth, semi-structured, and open-ended questions. The research in question also requires an in-depth understanding of individual narratives of the participants.

Thus, semi-structured interview, a particular data collection technique within the qualitative method, has been used for this particular line of investigation.

7.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been frequently used in studying domestic violence, among others (see for example Crawford et al., 2009; Aymer, 2008; Kachaeva et al., 2008). Generally speaking, there is a plethora of instruments that can be used for research purposes when undertaking qualitative research. These include, among others, un-structured interviews, ethnography, and document analysis. The main objective of this research was to be able to collect narrative data of experiences of women that had committed violence against men. According to Kvale (1996), interviews are a powerful tool in order to gather narrative data, allowing the researcher to explore participant's views in greater depth. Therefore, Semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable approach for this study. Unstructured interviews were also a consideration, especially because they allow for exploring the answers of the participants (Bryman, 2015). However, unstructured interviews can be time consuming, which would be an issue in this case, especially as the time provided to speak with the participants of this study was limited, due to the prison timings. In such a case, it was important to use a method of data collection that maintained some form of structure for the researcher to ask the main questions and explore various aspects of the answers in more detail only where necessary.

Semi-structured interviews are therefore useful in capturing the perceptions of the participants on any topic (Bryman, 2015). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews do not only provide a structure for the main questions that need to be covered, but also provides flexibility to explore the participants answers further and deviate from the interview schedule if the answers deem that necessary (Bryman, 2015). Furthermore, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) are of the opinion that semi-structured interviews are often the most effective and convenient way gathering information due to its flexibility; allowing researchers to change the style, tone and order of questions in order to gain a richer response from participants. The use of the semi-structured

interviews for this study was also important to assess the impact of education and employment on Saudi women. Like other methods for data collection, semi-structured interview has its shortcomings, mainly based on the time required to collect the data, and the labour-intensive process it involves. It is for this reason that it is suggested that no more than two interviews are conducted per day (Morse and Field, 2015).

Within the context of this study, the researcher sought to inquire about such individual stories that participants might not want to share even with the other prisoners. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the vulnerability of the participants, as Silverman (2011) underlines, trust was an essential component of the researcher-participant relationship. Because the research required in-depth exploration on very sensitive topics related to family and personal lives, the semi-structured interview technique was considered to be the most appropriate data collection method. It helped participants to recall their recent and past experiences and thus enabled the researcher to gain access to the participants' thoughts, feelings, and understandings, which were crucial for the researcher to analyse the motives behind their actions (Sarantakos, 2012). The interviews were conducted in a conversation style approach, as suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009).

7.2.   Interview Schedule

This section will focus on the rationale for the use of certain questions as part of the interview. As noted earlier, the purpose of this study is to understand and explain the reasons for why some women in Saudi Arabia commit domestic violence against men. As such, the interview schedule was created to acquire valuable data in order to answer the research questions set out for this study. The semi-structured interview method enabled the researcher to alter questions depending on participants' backgrounds and responses. Therefore, slightly different probes were used with each individual, in order to ensure that each question was understood and answered as fully as possible by each participant. For example, some questions that sought to find out about women's experiences with polygamy were not asked to women who had not been in a polygamous marriage (see Appendix1 for a complete interview schedule).

The interview schedule was divided into four main parts and combined two main sets of questions; factual questions covering personal characteristics and events, and exploratory questions covering feelings, experiences and attitudes of respondents.

Part 1 of the interview schedule sought to understand the family composition of the participants, and their experiences with living in such a family composition. This section also focused on the experiences of women who were living in a polygamous relationship. Examples of the questions asked in this part include:

- What is the composition of your family household, and is there a hierarchal order within the household?

- Can you explain more about your marriage status and your role within the family household?

- What do you feel about polygamy and your status in your polygamous marriage (if in a polygamous relationship)?

- Does being involved in a Polygamous marriage hold meaning for you?

- Does it hold value for all the wives (if involved in polygamous relationship)? Explain what values it holds for you?

- Are these values shared by all the wives? If not, why not?

- What are your roles within the household?

- If in polygamous relationship do all the wives hold the same roles?

- What are your feelings are the guardianship system? Why do you think this way?

- How has your experience been living with your guardian? Please Explain.

Part 2 of the interview sought to understand the educational status of the participants, and also the perception of education among their family, in particular the male members of the household. Examples of questions include:

- Can you describe your educational status, and why did you (or did you not) think getting an education was (or was not) important?

- What are the views of the male family members regarding the female family members holding or not holding an educational qualification?

- What are the expectations about your educational status, or non-educational status?

Employment was the main focus of Part 3. Here, participants were asked about their career and what it meant to them. Questions were also designed to capture information on the perception of the family members regarding the respondents' employment. Examples of questions include:

- When you hear the term career what does this mean to you, and why?

- Would catering for the house and family be regarded as a career?

- Is your family supportive of your career?

- What are your family's views on you working (or not working)?

- Does having a job (or not having a job) give a sense of independence to you (or not)? How?

The central focus of Part 4 of the interview, which also consists of the main part of the interview, was the offence. Questions designed for this part sought to understand the circumstances and/or motivations that led to the offence, how the participants felt about committing the offence, and to understand the role of education and employment in the committing of the offence. Examples of questions include:

- Can you describe the offence you are currently serving a sentence for?

- What were the events that led to the incident?

- Was violence an issue in your marriage, and how did this impact upon your relationship with your spouse?

- How do you now feel about the offence/s for which you were convicted?

- In regard to your offence, would you say your educational status had any impact? Please explain how and why?

- Does your family blame your actions on your education? (If educated)

- Did violence stem from your polygamous relationship (if in polygamous relationship)?

- Was violence only an issue with your husband, or other wives? Explain.

- Did being involved in a polygamous relationship influence the offence? Why?

- Did violence stem from your guardian's actions?

Some questions in the interview were designed to understand how education and employment changed the views of the participants regarding guardianship and polygamy.

7.3.   Use of Language

The use of language can facilitate or hinder good communication during research. It is therefore important that the language used when conversing with the participants is simple and easy to understand. In the context of this research, it was important to maintain sensitivity in the use of language as the participants were convicted women accused of perpetrating domestic violence against their spouse or guardian.

According to Elmesky (2005), the use of a common language between a researcher and the participant can assist in sharing point of views and subsequent interpretations. In this case, the researcher was able to converse with the participants in Arabic language. It was also important to ensure that all interviews were conducted in Arabic as some participants had not received any formal education and could not speak any other language. In this way, the language barrier, which can be a significant impediment, (Van de Ven and Delbecq, 1972) was avoided.

Using Arabic for interviews meant that raw data needed to be translated into English. In order to ensure the quality of the translations, a two-step process was utilised. The interviews were first translated verbatim from Arabic to English by the researcher. A bilingual Saudi, who was fluent in Arabic and English Language, was also asked to translate the Arabic interviews into English. Once completed, the two translations were compared, inconsistencies (if any) were noted, and discussed. Due to the nature of the Arabic language, some words and phrases do not have a direct English translation; however, given that Arabic is also the main language of the researcher, such nuances were not missed.

7.4. Field Notes

Field notes have been an important part of qualitative research for decades (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). Initially, field notes were not considered useful for analysis, as they were considered as a collection of the researcher's own private thoughts, queries and ideas about the research they were undertaking and the observations they subsequently made (Ottenberg, 1990). However, currently, researchers are encouraged to write field notes in order to enhance the data collected and provide useful context for analysis (Mulhall, 2003; Patton, 2002). With this is view, field notes were also collected as part of the interviews conducted with participants in this study. The main purpose of collecting field notes was to note down any surprising observations that emerged from the information being provided by the participants, to observe the living standards of participants in prison to help situate the information obtained, contextually. Field notes were also used to record my own thoughts as a researcher undertaking the interviews.

Table 3: Background Information on the Respondents (all names are pseudonyms)

	Name	Marital Status	Level of Education	Employment	Offence Committed	Relationship with Victim	Sentence
1	Salwa	Married/Polygamy	Bachelor's	Teacher	Burning	Husband	Capital Punishment
2	Njod	Married/Polygamy	Secondary	Unemployed	Hitting	Husband	4 years
3	Amal	Married/Polygamy	Bachelor's	Banker	Attempted Murder	Husband	Capital Punishment
4	Maruam	Married	Bachelor's	Teacher	Attempted Murder	Husband	15 years
5	Soha	Divorced	Master's	Teacher	Attempted Murder	Brother	Life Sentence
6	Naduah	Single	Bachelor's	Businesswoman	Burning	Brother	5 years
7	Sarah	Single	Secondary	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Uncle	Life Sentence
8	Nour	Divorced	Primary	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence
9	Ahlam	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Husband	5 years
10	Roaa	Married	Secondary	Cleaner	Attempted Murder	Husband	5 years
11	Hamadh	Divorced	No Education	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence
12	Ashoug	Married	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Husband	Life Sentence
13	Sabah	Single	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence
14	Foz	Single	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Brother	Life Sentence
15	Farah	Married/Polygamy	No Education	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Husband	5 years
16	Samah	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Father-in-Law	Judgement Pending
17	Layla	Married	Bachelor's	Teacher	Attempted Murder	Husband	15 years
18	Arwa	Married	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Husband	Life Sentence
19	Tafadh	Divorced	Master's	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Brother	Life Sentence
20	Afrah	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Murder	Husband	5 years
21	Roba	Married	No Education	Cleaner	Murder	Husband	15 years

	Name	Marital Status	Level of Education	Employment	Offence Committed	Relationship with Victim	Sentence
22	Weed	Single	Secondary	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence
23	Abeer	Single	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Brother	Life Sentence
24	Badreah	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Attempted Murder	Husband	Judgement Pending
25	Bdoor	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Hitting	Husband	Judgement Pending
26	Saeedh	Single	Secondary	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence
27	Souad	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Hitting	Husband	10 years
28	Maha	Single	Secondary	Cleaner	Hitting	Brother	5 years
29	Mnerah	Married	No Education	Unemployed	Hitting	Husband	10 years
30	Wejoud	Divorced	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Hitting	Brother	Life Sentence

8. Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important step in research after the completion of the data collection. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), once data collection has been completed, it requires processing before it can be analysed. The main purpose of data analysis is to transform the raw data obtained during the course of the research into meaningful information through the process of interpretation, analysis and discussion.

In this study, a thematic approach was used in order to provide a structured framework for understanding and describing the motivations of women perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

According to Lyons and Coyle (2008), thematic analysis can be used to identify and report patterns within qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006: p. 78) add that "the thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data." Generally, there are two levels of analysis in the thematic approach; semantic (explicit) level, and latent (interpretive) level (Boyatzis, 1998). In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis, both of these levels are important. Through thematic analysis, respondents' experiences, thoughts and feelings can be identified and reported in a series of themes, or sub themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006; p. 87), there are six phases of thematic analysis. These are illustrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p 87)

	Phase	Description of the process
1	Familiarizing with own data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	Producing the report The final opportunity for analysis.	Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

8.1.   Coding Procedure

Braun and Clarke (2006: p. 87) state that "the process of transcription, while it may seem time consuming, frustrating and at time[s] boring, can be an excellent way to start familiarizing yourself with the data." Taking this into consideration at the beginning of the data analysis process, the interviews collected from participants were transcribed into written form by the researcher. Although this process was laborious, it proved to be a useful exercise, as it allowed the researcher to acquaint herself with the data prior to the analysis.

As noted earlier, the interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, while the results of the research were reported in English. The initial transcription of the interviews was undertaken in Arabic by the researcher to ensure that certain linguistic nuances could be identified and later translated into English appropriately. This step was important, as a meaning of certain words, for example "*masalahalzauage*" (marriage matters), "*altaa*" (obedience) and "*algdoe*" (obligation), is heavily influenced by the prevalent culture and norms in Saudi Arabia, as well as the religion of Islam.

Following the transcription of the interviews, the process of coding was started. During this process, similar emerging patterns and accounts were selected and contained in nodes. According to Bazeley (2009), once information has been gathered in nodes, these then become the point at which concepts branch out into a network of dimensions. For the purposes of this study, the nodes were developed from within, and across the interview transcripts, as this allows for grouping, categorisation and recording of information into a series of themes and sub-themes.

The process of open-coding began with the researcher reading all the interview transcripts manually and establishing nodes. The nodes for this research were established in two ways. The first set of nodes was informed by the literature review on the topic. This approach is considered as a deductive approach as outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999). This gave a good starting point to prepare nodes and begin in-depth manual coding. The example nodes were informed by the literature; liberation theory, for example, served as a guide for the questions that focused on the employment backgrounds and the education levels of the participants as well as the type of violence committed by them.

The second set of nodes emanated inductively from the data, an approach that has been used by Boyatzis (1998). It was obvious from the manual reading of the transcripts that very useful information emerged from the answers that could be used in answering the identified research questions for the study but may not necessarily have been highlighted in the literature review of the topic. After completing the

coding process of all interviews, an initial coding framework was established. Some examples of initial coding used are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: An example of an initial coding framework

Interview transcript	Initial coding framework
Researcher: **Can you describe your educational status, and why you thought getting an education was important?** *Respondent (Maruam):* **"I have a Bachelor's degree. Education to me is very important. For me, education means liberation, independence, awareness of human rights and rejecting injustice. Also, education helped me to establish good relationships with people around me, it helped me to know my rights, and know that I should not be subjected to injustice at the hands of men and the arbitrary laws they have made."**	Independence and Self Reliance Awareness of Rights Building good relationships Reject Injustice
Researcher: **What were the events that led to the incident (Offence)?** *Respondent (Bdoor):* **"… I am a housewife and I accord my husband all his rights as a man and as my guardian, but he hit me and abused me. I could not ask him to divorce me because I cannot live a safe life without a man. I tried to defend myself and my children from abuse, but I could not. He is my guardian and I should accept everything"**	Physical abuse 'Safe life' Child abuse Dependency Negative impact of guardianship

In total, 50 initial codes were established. These codes were then accumulated to formulate a shorter list of 13 categories that were then further reviewed by the researcher. Table 6(see below) shows the final coding framework after the reduction in categories. Once these categories were compiled, further reviewing, comparing and contrasting were undertaken. This resulted in a final set of three latent themes, along with nine semantic themes (sub-themes).

Table 6: Themes and sub-categories

Themes – Final Coding Framework	Sub-Categories
Perceived benefits of education	Independence and self-reliance Awareness of rights Building good relationships Reject injustice
Male perception of female education	No encouragement Rebellion against traditions No value Mixed perception
Meaning and benefit of career and employment	Financial independence Dignity Freedom and independence Self-reliance Reject injustice Awareness of rights
Importance of Housework	No choice For children and spouse Prefer employment over housework
Acceptance of patriarchal practices	Safe life Dependency Guardians religious rights Tolerate abuse and mistreatment
Rejection of patriarchal practice	Form of abuse Restricts choice Negative impact of guardianship Feeling of frustration
Reasons for committing offence	Abuse and Mistreatment Discourages employment Discourages education Threats of divorce Threats of taking away children Jealousy/retribution Self-defence Lack of support from family

Themes – Final Coding Framework	Sub-Categories
Process of committing offence	Immediate threat to life Planned offence Reactive offence
Feelings after committing offence	Fear of retribution Regret No regret
Lack of support from authorities	Problems registering complaints Guardian's permission Returned to guardian
Preference of Prison over guardianship	Want to go to prison Liberation from guardianship Feeling of being free No guardian control
Form of abuse and mistreatment	Physical abuse Sexual abuse Verbal abuse Deprivation of food and drink

Data analysis for this research was performed using the software NVIVO 10. This software is a useful tool for organising, effectively managing large volume of qualitative data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Burnard et al., (2008) also consider the use of software during the coding process a useful tool in managing the qualitative data gathered by the researcher. Although the NVIVO software was used for the technical aspects of coding, there still remained a significant need for the research to manually read and established the appropriate nodes from the interview transcripts. Additionally, the written observation notes gathered during the data collection process were also manually analysed to assist with effective interpretation of the data gathered and fully understand the accounts provided by the women participants. The observational data includes notes of various aspects, such as the environment in which the respondents were living, the general working of the prison, the body language, and tone of speaking of the participants (during interview) among others.

8.2.   Reliability and Validity

The concept of reliability and validity in qualitative research is different than that used in a quantitative research setting. Nonetheless, it is important to establish a criterion for assessing the reliability and validity in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the equivalent terms of reliability and validity for qualitative study are credibility, transferability and trustworthiness. They argue that the focus of the qualitative research should be placed on how dependable the results are, rather than obtaining identical results. While credibility and transferability are also considered as internal and external validity in quantitative research, trustworthiness, on the other hand, is the main criterion for testing in qualitative studies (Yin, 1994).

There are three ways in which the dependability of the results can be improved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). The first way is through the position of the researcher; that the researcher has provided an explicit explanation of the process involved in research design. The second way is through the use of different methods of data collection. The last suggested way is that the research provides a clear explanation of the processes used during the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the course of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1999).

As has been mentioned earlier, the primary aim of this study is to understand the main motivations of women in committing act of domestic violence against men in Saudi Arabia. The main instrument used for gathering the accounts of the participants was interviews; therefore, the main focus has been the validity of the questions that asked the individual motivations of the participants for their offences. It was for this reason that an interview schedule was developed as part of the data collection process. This helped in establishing a standard set of questions that were asked to all participants with a view that the standardisation of questions could increase the reliability of the data, as it would allow for a greater probability of similar responses being captured during the interview process.

Face to face interviews also offer an advantage in terms of the validity of the qualitative research. This is because it allows for data to be gathered in a number of different ways, such as through recording the actual interviews and making observational notes.

9. Characteristics of the Respondents

The participants of this research were 30 women imprisoned in Riyadh following conviction for acts of violence against men in domestic settings. They were held at the Riyadh Prison for Women, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This prison is classed as a high security prison. Inmates in this prison share cells and are only allowed to be visited by the inmates' mothers. The visits are restricted to only once a week, and mothers are generally asked to provide clothing and some money to the inmate they are visiting so that they are able to purchase extra supplies such as sweets and soft drinks from inside the prison. The prison also provides 'special Islamic education' to the inmates. The cells that the participants were living in were very dark, with very little natural light, and they had no access to any form of entertainment. These participants were willing to move out of their daily routines and share their experiences of committing domestic violence against the guardian of their family.

The tables 7, 8 and 9 below provide a summary of the offences committed by the participants, whom the offences were committed against, and the length of sentences being served.

Table 7: Summary of Crimes Committed by Respondents

Crimes Committed	No. of Respondents
Burning	2
Attempted Murder	15
Murder	2
Hitting	11
Total	**30**

Table 8: Summary of Those Whom Crimes were Committed Against

Crimes Committed Against	No. of Respondents
Husband	16
Brother	12
Uncle	1
Father-in-law	1

Table 9: Length of Sentences Being Served by the Participants

Length of Sentence	No. of Respondents
4 years' prison	1
5 years' prison	6
10 years' prison	2
15 years' prison	3
Life Sentence	13
Capital Punishment	2
Judgement Pending	3

As summarised in Tables 7, 8 and 9, half of the respondents were convicted for attempted murder, and most of the respondents were given a life sentence. Although one respondent was given a 4-year prison sentence, it must be noted that in Saudi Arabia, a woman cannot leave the prison without the approval of her guardian. For two participants, the sentence had not been decided at the time of interview. As for the question of whom the crimes committed against (Table 8), the majority of the crimes were committed against husbands, followed by brothers.

The majority of the respondents had received some form of education. Table 10 below summarises the level of education of the respondents.

Table 10: Respondent's Level of Education

Level of Education	No. of Respondents
No Education	10
Primary	1
Secondary	6
Bachelors	11
Masters	2

In total, 20 respondents had obtained some form of education, with 11 of these participants having a bachelor's degree. 10 respondents did not have any formal education. The majority of the participants were unemployed. Table 11 below provides a summary of employment based on the education levels among participants.

Table 11: Education level and employment of the respondents

Education	No. of Respondents	
	Employed	Unemployed
No Education	1	9
Primary	0	1
Secondary	2	4
Bachelor's	5	6
Master's	1	1
Total	9	21

In total, 21 participants were unemployed at the time of committing the offence. Only one participant with no education was employed. Among participants that were employed, most participants worked as a teacher. Table 12 below, provides a summary of the occupations of the employed participants.

Table 12: Respondents' Occupation

Job Role	Number of Respondents
Teacher	4
Cleaner	3
Banker	1
Business Woman	1
Total	9

10. Conclusion

This research aims to examine the factors that lead women to use violence against men, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia. In order to do so, this research utilises semi-structured interviews of 30 participants purposefully selected from 150 inmates at the Riyadh Prison for Women, Saudi Arabia, who had been convicted of committing violence against men, in particular their guardian. In order to analyse the data collected, the research utilised thematic analysis to understand why participants of this study committed the offence, and assessed the impact of factors such as education, employment, and prevalent patriarchal practices in Saudi Arabia on participants' decision to commit the offence.

CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. Introduction

The present study attempts to understand the motives leading women to commit acts of violence against men. Towards that purpose, as noted in the methodology chapter, interviews were conducted with 30 women convicted for violence against men, and a content analysis technique was employed to analyse the data. This chapter lays out the themes that emerged from the content analysis. A further discussion of the implications of these findings in relation to the main question of the study will be presented in the following chapter.

As a result of the content analysis, a number of themes, around which the women in the sample rationalised their acts of violence against men, have surfaced. For all women, *the behaviour of the men* in question was a contributing factor for their violent crimes against them. 21 respondents reported some form of mistreatment, violence, disrespect, or abuse from the men they assaulted. 16 participants expressed *dissatisfaction with their role in society*, and reported conflicts around issues such as education, employment, and patriarchal practices. The views of respondents differed on topics such as *guardianship laws*; however, most of the women interviewed reported feeling a *lack of support from either* the *family members or the legal system*.

2. Forms of Violence and Relationship with Victims

This section focuses on the forms of violence used by participants against their victims. Individual acts of violence may be both reactive and instrumental (Bushman and Anderson, 2001), and some researchers have suggested that violent crimes can be identified in four different ways: purely reactive, reactive/instrumental, instrumental/reactive, or purely instrumental (Woodworth and Porter, 2002). Instrumental violence is motivated by the attainment of an external goal; i.e. it is used to achieve a certain desired outcome (Berkowitz, 1993). Unlike reactive violence, which is usually in response to an emotional situation or an imminent threat, instrumental violence typically involves less emotion and more pre-meditation (ibid.). Within the context of this study, spontaneous violence means where a participant

undertook an act of violence as an immediate reaction to being subjected to violence (reactive violence), whereas pre-mediated violence refers to instances where the participant planned their offence in advance and knew exactly what they wanted to do (instrumental violence).

Based on how the participants described the events leading to the crime, in 14 cases, acts of violence were pre-planned rather than spontaneous. The analysis reveals that those who committed spontaneous violence against their spouses or guardians were in general driven by motives, such as self-defence and protection against abuse and domestic violence. On the other hand, those who pre-planned their acts, however, expressed their reasons in terms of wanting emancipation, freedom from mistreatment and liberation. Additionally, in terms of demographic characteristics, the analysis reveals that most of those who pre-planned their acts were educated women. By contrast, uneducated women were more likely to report that they spontaneously resorted to violence in order to defend themselves, and that it was not pre-meditated. Some quotes from the interviews clearly illustrate the processes leading to both spontaneous and pre-meditated violence.

Participants that committed spontaneous acts of violence mainly reported being victims at the time they committed their offence. In other words, these participants resorted to violence to protect themselves against violence from their guardians. Mnerah, for example recalled:

> I was a housewife. My husband used to beat me every day and subjugate me. He prevented me from visiting my family. Even though I did not like that, I used to obey him. He hit me in front of my children, then he stabbed me with a knife to torture me. One day, he tried to kill me, I could not escape as usual as he was suffocating me. I assaulted him to save my life (Mnerah, uneducated, unemployed, married).

For this woman, it seems that, there was "no other solution" other than violence. She also stated that at the time of the assault, her husband was trying to kill her and that

she feared for her life. Both respondents committed acts of violence at a point in time when they felt their lives were threatened. According to Afrah:

> *My husband used to hit me and my children. He abused me a lot during the 15 years of our relationship. I used to obey him, but he used to hit me a lot. One day, he was beating me so much that I was finding it difficult to breathe. I hit him with a wooden stick to defend myself, but he died. The police came and arrested me, even though when the doctor checked me, he confirmed that many of the marks on my neck were signs that my husband tried to suffocate me and electrocute me. Because he tied me to an electric wire, I had burns all over my body (Afrah, uneducated, unemployed, married)*

Following her arrest, Afrah was given a five-year sentence in jail, even though her experience clearly shows that she acted purely in self-defence. In another incident, Sarah tried to defend herself against the sexual abuse from her uncle:

> My uncle tried to rape me many times, but I escaped from him. Then I told my dad, but my dad allowed my uncle to rape me in exchange for drugs. One day, my uncle came to my room, I was scared, but when he was raping me, I stabbed him with a knife to defend myself (Sarah, educated, unemployed, single)

This does not only show that her act of violence was in immediate response to the assault she experienced at the time, but also that the sexual assaults of her uncle had been condoned by another family member, her father. Other respondents also reported physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as neglectful treatment by their husbands or guardians. Hamadh for example, said:

> [My brother] used to hit me repeatedly and not spend on me; also, he assaulted me and tried to kill me. Then I assaulted him back with a piece of metal to defend myself (Hamadh, uneducated, unemployed, divorced)

Hamadh reported long-term abuse, up to and including her brother attempting to kill her. She also reported that her assault on her brother was an act of self-defence, which is similar to the reasons stated by the respondents above.

Another respondent, Souad, was forced to live in terrible conditions, and resorted to violence after severe deprivation and beatings from her husband:

> My husband would beat me several times a day, and he also forced me to live in a room with no electricity, water, or gas or even a bed, just like a prison; he would not give me food either. And took my children away from me. That day, he beat me severely then I stabbed him with a knife to kill him to protect my life from abuse. (Souad, uneducated, unemployed, married)

While these women undertook acts of violence against men in self-defence, those who pre-planned their acts, on the other hand, provided details about the processes leading to their acts of violence. Arwah described how she took several steps to address problems with her husband, before deciding that violence was her only option:

> [My husband] prevented me from looking for a job so that I could submit to him for years; he prevents my children from getting education as well. And when I asked to look for a job, so I could spend on the children, he refused to give me permission. Then I decided to liberate myself, so I went to police to ask for help, but there was no reaction. Then I did not find any other solution but to try to kill him to end his control over my life and my children's freedom (Arwa, educated, unemployed, married).

Having failed to get help from the police, Arwa felt she had no other option than taking care of her situation and protecting her children's future.

Layla also admitted that she planned killing her husband, who did not allow her to work, so that she could end a "problem" in her life and achieve a specific goal:

> I tried many time to discuss my rights as a human with my guardian, but he would not listen to me. One day I wanted to go to work, but he did not allow me to. So, I decided to remove this problem from my life. I stabbed him and then escaped (Layla, educated, employed, married).

As noted earlier, without the guardian's permission, Saudi customs do not allow a woman to take up employment. Her problem in this case was that she felt her husband did not respect her rights and did not listen to her when she tried to reason with him. Frustrated with her situation, the participant made up her mind to commit the act of violence and proceeded according to plan. Another respondent, Salwa set fire to her husband during his sleep following a dispute about divorce:

> I asked my husband to divorce me, but he refused. He said, 'I change wives as I wish'. I told him that I would go to the court to ask for a divorce, but he said, 'the court will ask you to give me back the dowry I paid for you before the marriage.' He also said, 'remember that your daughter is more than seven years old; that means the court will give her custody to me to live with my wife'. Then I decided to end this slavery. So, I went to my husband when he was asleep, and I burnt him (Salwa, educated, employed, polygamy as first wife).

In this case, she had asked for a divorce, only to be refused by her husband and further threatened with the custody of her daughter. Therefore, she planned her act of violence in advance to "end [her] slavery". In this case, she viewed violence as the only means to achieve liberation from her guardian. She waited until her husband was asleep before setting him to fire, indicating a level of pre-meditation. Another respondent, Naduah, also expressed similar frustrations before she planned for her offence:

> I am educated and know my rights. I am also employed, but he tries to take my salary and prevents me from going out. My brother tries to control every aspect of my life, even marriage. I asked him if I could live in a separate house. But in Saudi Arabia, it is not permissible for a woman to live alone without the permission of her

> guardian, and if he complains, the police will just force me to go back
> to live with him. He could also ask themto take me to prison, so
> there was really no solution. So, I had no choice but to kill my
> brother to obtain liberation. I decided to kill him, so I burnt the flat
> when he was asleep (Naduah, educated, employed, single)

As above-cited remarks of the participants show, in many cases, participants clearly stated that they had tried to find solutions such as seeking permission to work, asking for the right to divorce and asking support from security forces that did not involve violence, before they came to the conclusion that violence was the only way they could change their situation. The women in question used *pre-planned violence* to solve difficulties and problems in their lives.

For some other respondents the experience of being subjected to long-term abuse and mistreatment also led to planning violence against their oppressors. For example, in the case of Farah, although she mentioned assaulting her husband for self-defence reasons, the circumstances also suggest that she did so out of jealousy and planned her act.

> My husband married again. I did not refuse this because it is an
> aspect of his rights as a man but I assaulted him to defend myself.
> He kept hitting me every day and he treated his second wife better
> than me. I wanted to stop him (Farah, uneducated, unemployed,
> polygamy as second wife).

The acts of violence described by the participants in this study show a high level of instrumentality. They discussed their actions in terms of desire to achieve their goals (such as liberation from an unacceptable situation) and described violence as a "solution" to the problem they faced. Women, especially those with some level of education, described how they felt more liberated whilst in prison, compared with their life outside of prison. For instance, Soha, who had been given a life sentence for her offence, mentioned:

> I attempted to murder my brother, as I knew I will be imprisoned
> and he will not allow me to leave the prison. I now have a life
> sentence here and I am happy because in this prison, I have more
> freedom than I did under my guardian. I am free from him now
> (Soha, educated, employed, divorced)

Women that are convicted and imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for any offence cannot leave the prison unless they are accompanied by a consenting guardian (El Doseri, 2013). Hence, in the case of Soha, the offence was committed knowing the consequences.

The discussion provided in this section indicates that those women who committed spontaneous violence against their spouses or guardians were particularly motivated by the reasons of self-defence, protection against abuse and domestic violence. On the other hand, those participants that committed pre-planned acts were found to be motivated by their desire for emancipation, freedom from mistreatment and liberation.

3. Reasons for Committing Violence

All respondents in this study had committed violence against the male members of their family. By using content analysis, observation and field notes made during the interviews, a number of themes were established to explain and capture the reasons provided by participants as to why they committed the act of violence. In this section, a descriptive account of these reasons captured through a number of themes is presented. The themes provide useful information and insight regarding the committed offence, the events that led to the respondent committing the offence, the participants' perceptions on the main reasons for why they committed the offence and their feelings after they had undertaken the act of violence.

3.1. Frustrations with Patriarchal Practices

The main focus of this study has been the two patriarchal practices prevalent in Saudi Arabia, namely, *polygamy* and the *guardianship* system. According to the Saudi Law,

every Saudi woman must have a male guardian, typically a father or husband, or her brother, grandfather, father's brother or son. The guardian is responsible for making a range of important decisions on the woman's behalf. Polygamy, on the other hand, is the custom of having more than one spouse at a time; however, it applies to only men in Saudi Arabia, and it is seen as men's right to be able to marry more than one wife. It is a very common practice in the country, as it is widespread among both the uneducated and the educated segments of the Saudi society. For many Saudi women, polygamy extends the already existing negative consequences of patriarchal control over women, and they are increasingly coming to regard polygamy as a further form of abuse against women's honour and rights (Al Khateeb, 2007; Yamani, 2008).

In the same vein, the participants of this research also indicated that they regarded polygamy as a form of abuse. One of the participants, for example, stated that by marrying a second time, her husband ignored her rights, honour, views and feelings as a first wife. A similar perspective was also expressed by Amal, who was the second wife of her husband:

> I married my husband when he was already with another wife. I found that polygamy is a kind of abuse against women. I could not bear being in a polygamy relationship, so I asked him to divorce me, but he refused my request. (Amal, educated, employed, polygamy as second wife)

For Amal, polygamy was an abusive practice. The same was the case also for another respondent, Farah, who tried to negotiate with her husband, who had already married twice before (including the respondent) when he wanted to marry another woman. However, her husband did not care about her views or feelings and married again. Farah saw this as a major factor leading her to turn to violence:

> My husband wanted to marry again, which he has a right to as a man. I tried to stop him, but he did not care about my feelings and my rights. In his wedding party, I made a plan to burn the wedding place to kill him" (Farah, uneducated, unemployed, polygamy as second wife).

As her remarks convey, Farah clearly felt rejected by her husband, who did not value her feelings. Her husband wanted to fulfil his rights as a man and married a third time.

Another respondent, Njod, also tried to reason with her husband, by reminding him her rights as wife and sharing her concerns about their relationship, but to no avail. Njod's husband continued enforcing the patriarchal gender roles on her and wanted her to look after the house, cook and clean. Njod believed that her husband was stripping her of her rights as a wife and a woman, for example, by making decisions about her life, education, and employment. Njod also felt that her husband did not respect her as a human by not listening to her concerns. She felt as if she were living only to fulfil the desires of her husband. Consider her following remarks:

> I tried to discuss my rights with my husband many times, but he refused every time. He said, 'you are just a woman; you do not have any rights. You are just for having sex, cooking, and you should stay at home'…." (Njod, educated, unemployed, polygamy as first wife).

According to Njod, not only was she denied her rights, but her husband decided to assert his right to polygamy and marry a second time as well. Njod continued:

> …Then my husband decided to marry again. I asked him why, and he said it was his right as a man and the religion gave him this right. I told him that our religion allows men to marry again only if his wife is ill or she cannot give birth, but he refused to listen to me" (Njod, educated, unemployed, polygamy as first wife).

As the respondent stated, her husband insisted that his wife stay at home and be content with performing related functions. As Salwa notes below, her husband also expressed similar views:

> I am teacher, but my husband prevented me from living a good life. He just said, 'you are women, you should look after the children and keep silent'. He did not even allow me to discuss any issues with him, because I was a woman. Then he decided to marry again, because

he is a man, so he has all the rights… (Salwa, educated, employed, polygamy as first wife).

Especially the participants with some level of education underlined that their husbands had a quite narrow view of a woman's role in a household, which consisted of 'sex, cooking, and looking after children'. This is in line with what Sabbagh (1996) note that the primary role of women is seen as that of a nurturing house-wife. Such a view is obviously at odds with the views expressed by the educated women who emphasised the importance of education and work. Yet, participants also stressed that men were happy to assert their rights when it came to polygamy, even at the expense of ignoring the rights that are afforded to women by religion. Saeed's following statement is illustrative of this frustration:

> My guardian always says, 'you are a woman, you should stay at home, otherwise I will beat you every day.' I wanted to look for a job, but he imprisoned me in a dark room without food or water for many days. He then prevented me from going to the hospital for treatment or visiting my friends. He deprived me of all my life, so how was I meant to live like a normal human being? My parents also stood by and did nothing because he is a man… I just want to ask the government - why do we need a guardian? We are living in our homes, not in the streets or a war prison (Saeedh, educated, unemployed, single)

The desire for freedom and independence was a major theme that frequently surfaced in the responses of those women who expressed dissatisfaction with their situation and position in society—and most of these women were those with some level of education. As shown above, their complaints were mainly that their husbands and husbands' families did not provide them the freedom they felt they deserved. For many respondents, this led to a stronger desire for freedom. Arwa's following remarks exemplifies this situation well.

> I have rights, and I need to defend my rights… I need to feel free; I need to feel like a human. I asked my husband for divorce, but he refused that too. He just wanted to control every aspect of my life. I am really a slave in this society. At one time, my husband left me for five years with my family without any reason and at the same time he refused to divorce me. He still wanted to control me even after I he left me. I could not look for a job without his permission, he did not leave me any money, I could not marry again because he refused to divorce me, I wanted to continue my education during this time, but I could not because I needed his permission. I could not travel, and he did not give me the legal documents for our children to admit them into schools or for me to travel with them. I needed my rights, I wanted to be free, so I tried to shoot him and kill him. (Arwa, educated, unemployed, married)

Arwa expressed her desire for independence in saying, "I need to feel free; I need to feel like a human" and revealed her dissatisfaction with her role in society in stating, "I am really a slave". This was a source of great dissatisfaction and frustration for the participant, who clearly felt she was being denied the freedom that she deserved. Arwa eventually chose violence as a means to free herself from a husband who refused to divorce her and mistreated her.

The issues raised by the respondents are similar to those faced by women throughout the Saudi society, as documented by Human Rights Watch (2008) and others. Ertuk (2009) documents a number of cases where the Saudi women are unable to access their rights due to the patriarchal practices in Saudi society, such as the guardianship laws. HRW (2008) notes that educated women in Saudi Arabia have begun to fight against the guardianship system, because it infringes upon their rights and restricts their freedoms. However, women who have attempted to obtain their rights through the existing legal mechanisms in Saudi Arabia have largely been unsuccessful (Hamdan, 2005; Deif, 2008) and attempts to abolish/alter the Saudi guardianship laws have so far not succeeded in changing the government's stance (Tønnessen, 2016).

The respondents' frustrations with their situations can be better understood in this context: Saudi women have historically struggled to achieve emancipation through the existing legal structures to no avail. Resort to violence may then seem appealing to those women who have suffered oppression for extended periods of time.

This sentiment was echoed by another respondent, Maha, who also expressed her desire for freedom with the statement "I am human" and added that she felt like a slave:

> I need my freedom and my rights as a human being. I need to live an independent life. I want to feel that I am a human being. This is my right and I refuse to be controlled in every aspect of my life like a slave. My guardian is a man, but I am a human too... I am just fed up of being controlled and I just want my rights, my liberation, and my dignity. I could not bear being denied my rights, so I decided to fight against my guardian and assault him to escape this slavery life. Now I am happy in prison. Here I feel more liberated and in control of my life than back home with my guardian (Maha, educated, employed, single)

Maha had become so frustrated with her status in their house, being treated like a slave and being controlled by her brother, that even though she ended up in prison, the respondent still felt as if she were now "liberated" because she lived far from the reach of her guardian. Another participant, Tafadh, also explained that her brother (i.e. her guardian) did not permit her to work; as a result, she attempted to murder him:

> My brother constantly refused to give me permission to look for a job and to spend on myself. I tried to discuss this with him many times; he still refused... In the end, I tried to kill him with a knife, but I could not. Now in prison, I feel freer than I was within the guardianship system (Tafadh, educated, unemployed, single).

Tafadh's remark that the prison gave her a sense of freedom compared to being guarded at home was a common view among the respondents. For participants such as Tafadh, it was not easy to just look for employment, mainly because, under the guardianship system, many workplaces in Saudi Arabia do not employ women unless they have permission from their guardians. The situation is not clear from challenges for those in employment, either, as their permission to work could at any time be revoked by their guardian.

Responses from participants suggest felt that practices such as polygamy and the guardianship system did not benefit them, and instead constituted a form of abuse. They viewed these patriarchal practices as major obstacle to achieving their rights, and also a serious source of conflict. Many respondents did not want their husbands to take second wives and disagreed with their husbands who confined the role of women to home.

The guardianship system has been described as the most significant impediment to the realisation of women's rights in Saudi Arabia by Human Rights Watch (2008), and the findings presented in this section support this claim. Human Rights Watch (2008) has argued that the value of women as members of their society is undermined by their lack of basic rights, a sentiment that is shared especially by the educated participants in this study. Furthermore, Hamden (2005) and Dief (2008) argue that educated Saudi women have been more aware of their rights and have begun to challenge and reject the practice of guardianship, which may lead them to commit acts of domestic violence; an assertion which is consistent with the findings of this study.

3.2. Frustrations with Obstacles to Education and Employment

As highlighted earlier, certain participants were frustrated with the fact that male members of their family prevented them from attaining education and/or working outside home, which they identified as a factor driving them to commit offence. This section further explores the issue by presenting more concrete experiences of the participants in this study.

In essence, participants saw such prevention as an infringement of their rights and independence. The fieldwork revealed that these women considered access to education and employment opportunities as the only venues for achieving self-reliance, independence, and freedom in the long run; that is, as something they were not willing to forgo.

In a number of cases, the participants drew a direct link between threats to education and employment opportunities and committing violence against male members of their family. Two participants, Layla and Ashoug, for example, explained their cases as follows:

> I stabbed my husband with a knife because my husband would always prevent me from getting a job. He threatened me to go to my workplace and ask them to stop my employment. He also used to argue with me every morning to try to stop me for leaving for work. He just wanted to control me, but how can I live without a salary? I wanted to be independent, I wanted my full rights as a human, not as a woman in Saudi Arabia (Layla, educated, employed, married).

> I had a bachelor's degree and I was not working. I killed my guardian because he did not let me work. I tried to be independent and attempted to take my children with me to live with them in a separate house, but in Saudi Arabia, a woman is not allowed to live alone. So, I had no choice but to kill him to attain freedom (Ashoug, educated, unemployed, married).

Similar to the case of Tafadh, Ashoug could not work, as she could not obtain permission from her guardian. This requirement also affected another respondent, Roba, who could not study due to her parents' opposition to her studies and found a job as a cleaner at a hospital upon marriage. She explains below how she lost her job, as her husband, who was opposed to her working, went to her working place and revoked her work permit.

When I got married, I got a job as a cleaner, so I could spend on myself. But my husband just kept on controlling me and went to the hospital where I worked and asked them to fire me. I begged him to allow me to find another job, but he refused because I am a female and I should not work (Roba uneducated, employed, married).

Arwa voices the same frustration below:

Even though I had a bachelor's degree, I could not get a job because my husband refused to give me permission to look for one. This is where all my problems started. I tried many times to convince him that 'I am human, it is my right to continue education and have a job', but he kept refusing" (Arwa, educated, unemployed, married).

Arwa was clearly unhappy and felt confined. She had also asked for divorce, which was not accepted by her husband.

These women's desire to attain employment and be independent was prevented by their husbands or other male members of their families. As their statements presented above reveal, their frustration with the obstacles they faced led them to commit acts of violence against their guardians. What is it about education and employment that is so important to these women that drive them to such an extreme such as murder? The importance of education and employment to participants in the study is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

3.3. Experience of Abuse and Mistreatment and Lack of Support from the Family Members and the legal authorities

Respondents also identified the lack of support from their family members and the legal authorities as a factor in their reasons for committing violence. This lack of support contributed to their violence, since they often felt that they had no other choice. One respondent, Nour, stated that she had been forced into two failed marriages by her parents and guardians. She recalled:

My father forced me to marry a very old man when I was 13. I accepted this, but my husband did not sleep with me. I was still a virgin when he died. I came back to my family, but my father passed away and my brother became my guardian. He forced me to marry an old man again, which I accepted. My new husband did not sleep with me and abused me a lot. I was living in a desert to look after sheep and camels. Then my new husband died, and I went back to my family again. My brother forced me to marry an old man again, but I refused, and my brother started beating me. I assaulted him to defend myself; then the police convicted me (Nour, educated, unemployed, divorced).

According to Nour, her father and brother forced her into these marriages as they were both promised money in return. As her story reveals, Nour could no longer yield to her brother's wishes that she had to marry an old man again. Having done that two times already and been abused in one of them, she refused to be forced into a third marriage. Rather than supporting her request to not marry again, her guardian (in this case her brother) instead beat her, which led to her use of violence against him. Nour's story thus establishes a link between her brother's lack of support, use of violence and her eventual assault against him.

Other women described abuse and a lack of support from their husbands. Samah, for example, described her experience of being raped by her father-in-law, but felt that she could not turn to her husband for support:

I am an uneducated housewife, and my husband abused me every day. He would not respect me and would not allow me to visit my family. My husband's father tried to rape me and have sex with me, and he treated me harshly. I did not know what to do. If I were to tell my husband, he would not believe me and would hit me. One day, my husband's father came to my room to rape me. I could not escape, [and] then when he was raping me, I assaulted him to

escape. My husband informed the police to take me to prison (Samah, uneducated, unemployed, married).

In this case, the respondent experienced abuse from both her husband and her father-in-law. After she assaulted her father-in-law against his sexual assault, her husband reported her to police rather than supporting her or trying to defend her. This illustrates the lack of support the respondent experienced from her husband in terms of not being able to complain to him about his own father abusing her. Samah mentioned that she had explained her situation to the police, and that her case was to be treated as acting in self-defence, even with this clarification, she did not receive any support from her husband and was taken into custody. However, at the time of interviews, Samah's case was still under consideration by the Courts and no judgement had been given.

Lack of support from family members, guardians, and husbands was a contributing factor- if not the main cause- to these women's violent offences against men. These women wanted the male family members to support them and help them when they experienced abuse or violence. The lack of support was also underlined by previous studies. Izzidien (2008), for example, found that victims of domestic abuse often lacked any form of support or assistance from the extended family members. However, lack of support from the family members was not noted as a cause for domestic violence in the literature, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia. While all participants of this study did not highlight this as a cause for their offences, it was noted as a contributing factor and a source of frustration on the part of some of the participants, which could hence help address a knowledge gap in this area.

In some cases, women reported that the lack of support from the police gave them no choice but to assault their guardians, as the police returned them to their abusive guardians when they tried to seek help. Consider Roaa's story:

I have a bachelor's degree and I am a teacher. Employment enabled me to be independent from my husband, and to not to submit to anyone. I tried to kill my husband because I asked him to divorce me and allow me to take my daughter to be independent in my life, but,

he insisted on controlling me and prevent me from having my rights. I went to the police to report the abuse, but the guardianship system supported him. The police asked me to come back with my guardian to register my complaint. So, I did not find any other solution but to kill him to be free. (Roaa, educated, employed, married)

When Roaa sought help from the police to leave her husband, she was returned to him because of the guardianship system. She felt she had no choice but to kill her husband, since she could not see any other way of leaving him. She had previously tried, only to be returned to him by the police because he was her legal guardian. Another participant, Abeer had a similar experience, as she maintained:

… I have rights and I want to defend my rights. My brother prevents me from applying for a job and treats me like a slave. He controls everything in my life and does not allow me to go out. I need my rights, but the law and the values give him the right to control me. Many times, I reflected on running away, but the police would bring me back to my brother. That's why I decided to assault him to go to prison to obtain my liberation from my guardian (Abeer, educated, unemployed and single)

Abeer decided to assault her brother in order not to be enslaved by him any more. Like some of the respondents cited above, she expressed the view that she felt more liberated in prison than she did under the control of her guardian. Consider also Soha's experience, which illustrates yet another case of abuse, mistreatment, and the lack of support from the legal authorities:

I am educated and independent, but my brother does not respect me and takes my salary. I threatened him that I would go to the police, but when I did go to the police, the police asked me to come back with my guardian. How could I do that when I want to complain about my guardian? I tried to run away from home, but the police caught me and brought me back… (Soha, educated, employed, single)

The guardianship system made it difficult for her to complain to the police about the abuse and mistreatment she faced. Her guardian was the one abusing her, yet in order to file a complaint against him at the police station; the Saudi law required her to be accompanied by her guardian.

Weed experienced similar obstacles when trying to leave the control of her brother, who she stated controlled every aspect of her life:

> I live with my family as a slave. My older brother controls me and refused to give me permission to apply for a job... I tried to escape from home but my brother asked the police to bring me back (Weed, educated, unemployed, single).

Foz also stated that she received no support from her parents during her subjugation:

> My parents always support my brother. I had a very strong argument with him because he would prevent me from going to university to finish my education and beat me severely. I complained to my parents, but they stood up next to him and encouraged him further... (Foz, educated, unemployed, single).

Foz expressed deep frustration with the fact that she could not receive the support she expected from the other family members for her education. This arguably, contributed to her decision to choose violence.

Even in situations where some women accepted patriarchal practices, abuse and mistreatment led them to commit acts of violence. A few participants, for instance, referred to the concept of a "safe life". They felt that their husband or guardian provided a safe and secure life for them, and therefore it would be wrong for them to disobey them. Hamadh stated:

> I believe that I have to obey him as my guardian because he provides a safe life for me. But I hit him in response to an attack to save my life because he was abusing me (Hamadh, uneducated, unemployed, divorced).

The concept of safe life indicates being financially provided by the women's guardian. The participants who expressed this view felt that they could not question their guardians as they provided a safe life for them. This opinion aligns with the view of conservative segments in Saudi society, who justify the male guardianship system in religious terms (Doumato, 1999). According to the conservatives, the 'ideal woman' in Saudi society stays at home, looks after the house and raises children, whilst her male guardian acts as the breadwinner (Doumato, 1999). Within this arrangement, women are expected to submit to their male guardian. Especially uneducated women appear to embrace these notions in relation to their role in a marriage.

Another participant, Bdoor, also referred to her husband's provision of "safe life" within the context of her endurance to the abuse she experienced from her husband. As is clear from her words, she could not imagine a "safe life" without her guardian or a man:

> I am a housewife and I acquiesce in all the rights of my husband as a man and as my guardian, but he hit me and abused me. I could not ask him to divorce me because I cannot live a safe life without a man. I tried to defend myself and my children from abuse, but I could not. He is my guardian and I should accept everything (Bdoor, uneducated, unemployed, married).

While this respondent felt that she had to "accept everything" her husband did to her because he was her guardian, and that she could not imagine a "safe life" without him, she retaliated when faced with abuse and mistreatment, as this crossed the lines of providing a safe life.

Many of these women did not receive any support or help from their family members. The legal system also did not help them. In many cases, it hindered them from asking for their rights, since the guardianship system made it impossible for them to report to the police when they experienced subjugation at the hands of a guardian. In order to register a complaint at the police station, women are required by the Saudi Law to be accompanied by their guardians (See Chapter 2). Therefore, while the abuse and mistreatment they saw from their guardians was an important factor in the decisions

of these women to commit acts of violence, the lack of support they received from their family members or the legal authorities contributed to their decision by increasing their level of frustration and hence making them feel helpless.

4. Feelings After Committing Offence

As part of the interview, respondents also expressed their feelings after they had committed the offence. The responses received from participants present a clear divide in terms of their feelings of remorse upon committing their offence.

No Regret

Many of those women who did not regret their acts believed that they were in fact the victims. They viewed their violent crimes as a means to remove injustice and free themselves from abusive situations. Maruam expressed this in the following way:

> [I am] not regretful, no matter what the punishment is. I am fed up
> of men controlling every aspect of my life, obeying them even when
> they prevent me from my rights and treat me like a slave. I need my
> freedom and I want to be liberated (Maruam, educated, employed,
> married).

For this woman, her crime was a means to escape her life "like a slave", and for this reason she did not regret it even though she ended up in jail. This response is in the same line with the other responses quoted above, in which women felt that life in jail was more liberating than life with their husbands or guardians.

One respondent, Sarah, also cited the failure of human rights organisations to help her, which contributed her feeling of no regret after committing the crime:

> I don't regret at all because I went to an association of human rights
> but they did not help me and rejected me (Sarah, educated,
> unemployed, single).

Many women quoted above felt that they did not receive support or help from outside sources. While this contributed to their decision to commit violence, it also added to

their feeling of no regret for their crimes, because there was no one there to help them when they were suffering.

There was a strong feeling on the part of some respondents that they were in fact the victims, as summarised by Layla: "I am a victim, not a criminal, and I don't regret it" (Layla, educated, employed, married). Yet, some respondents expressed that although they did not regret their decision, they feared revenge: "I do not regret [it, but am] very scared of the future and the revenge of my father and brother" (Hamadh, uneducated, unemployed, divorced).

Overall, those who did not regret their violent behaviour considered themselves not criminals but as victims, despite being in jail. These were the women who complained about abuse, mistreatment, and most importantly, about being denied their rights. Hence, they were motivated by retribution and a desire for justice. The findings indicate that educated women were more likely to be driven by such motives, and hence, they are less likely to regret their acts.

Regret

The most common theme among those who regretted their decision was the fear that their spouse, father or brother (whomever the offence was committed against or other relatives, in case of death) would attempt to take revenge on them. Badreah, for instance, said: "I regret it because I fear that my husband will take revenge on me, and will take my children away from me" (Badreah, uneducated, unemployed, married). In this instance, Badreah regretted committing the offence, as she feared that her husband would seek revenge, and at the same time, she would no longer be able to see her children. In addition to fear of revenge, some women said they regretted committing the offence because they felt they had lost their chance to pursue a 'safe life'. Souad said, for example: "I do [regret] because life without a man is not a safe life" (Souad, uneducated, unemployed, married). For this participant, the idea that she would not have a safe life without her husband was what led her to regret her decision. Although this participant did not have a choice but to act in self-defence, she was still regretful of her decision.

Overall, fear of revenge from their guardian and loss of a safe life were among the main factors leading women to regret their violent acts. The analysis shows that uneducated and unemployed women were more likely to be regretful. The findings, in general, reflect a fear of patriarchal social norms, which is especially relevant given that these women reported receiving little or no support from their family or law enforcement when they tried to seek help or report their abuse.

5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the main research findings emerging from the analysis of collected data. The main objective of the chapter was to explore participants' motivation behind committing their offence. Broadly, the reasons for participants' acts of violence against their guardians can be divided into three main themes; *frustrations with patriarchal practices*, *frustrations with being hindered from seeking rights to education and employment*, and *experiences of abuse and mistreatment and lack of support from family members*. Additionally, research findings also suggest that some participants committed the offence in a planned manner, whereas some participants acted spontaneously and in self-defence. The feelings of the participants after committing the offence were also explored in this chapter, and findings suggest that although some participants feared retribution from the guardians once they were released from prison, majority of the participants did not regret their actions.

An emerging observation from the data analysis process is the link between education and employment, and the use of violence. Content analysis indicates that education or employment can be used to distinguish the motives, reactions and feelings of the participants committing the offence. For example, when considering the process leading to the offence (reactions), analysis suggests that women with some level of education or employment were more likely to undertake pre-planned violence, whereas, women with no education were more likely to commit violence in self-defence. Further analysis shows that this could be because women with some level of education rejected patriarchal practices and considered these a form of abuse. In order to better their situation, they attempted to report their guardians, but were not successful. This left these women with no other choice but to take matters in their

own hands. In contrast, women with no education were more tolerant of patriarchal practices, as they considered polygamy a man's right provided by religion and that the guardianship system provided them with a "safe life". Even when these women accepted patriarchal norms, when faced with abuse and mistreatment, they acted in self-defence and resorted to violence. Similarly, when analysing the feelings of the participants after committing the offence, it was seen that the participants that did not regret their decision were more likely to have some level of education and had pre-planned their offence. On the other hand, participants that regretted their decision were mostly those that had no education and feared that they lost their 'safe-life' and that their relatives would seek revenge. These factors are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

The present study asks two specific questions:

- What are the roles of patriarchal constraints, emancipatory longings and self-defence in driving acts of violence?

- To what extent do theories of liberation and self-defence explain the motives of domestic violence perpetrated by females in Saudi Arabia

Accordingly, this chapter will be organized into two parts. Based on the themes surfaced in the analysis and presented in Chapter 5, the first part of the chapter will discuss the implications of these findings in understanding what motivates women to commit acts of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, the role played by patriarchal constraints, emancipatory longings (section 2), and also of self-defence (section 3) in driving acts of violence will be examined. With regard to patriarchal practices, specific emphasis will be placed on the guardianship laws and polygamy in Saudi society. These practices are the most significant patriarchal practices in Saudi Arabia and are backed by Saudi laws. The women in this study expressed a range of different views on them—while some accepted them as normal, others rejected. Therefore, the study will also attempt to account for the factors that turn patriarchal practices and related constraints (such as prevention from education and employment) into a source of frustration for women. In that regard, the role of some demographic factors, specifically that of education and employment, will be considered in changing how women perceive the context they face.

The motives of committing violence against men will also be discussed in the context of self-defence. Many of the women interviewed described situations where they used violence as a last resort, in response to an imminent perceived threat on their lives. The use of violence as a self-defence will be considered along with some contextual factors such as lack of legal and/or family support, which, by constraining the options available to them, arguably contributed to these women's use of violence. The second part of the chapter will evaluate the findings in a larger context in the light

of existing theoretical accounts of women's use of violence, in particular the liberation theory and the self-defence theory (section 4).

2. The Role of Patriarchal Constraints and Emancipatory Longings in the Use of Violence

There are a number of patriarchal practices that impact women negatively. In the context of Saudi Arabia particularly, patriarchy can be captured in the cultural practices of guardianship and polygamy (Al Hussein, 2014; Tonnesson, 2016), as well as prevention of women from education and employment. The system of guardianship has been ever present in Saudi Arabia and has been heavily criticised for being a significant impediment to women's empowerment in the country. Nonetheless, guardianship is something that is held dear in the laws of Saudi Arabia, main due to the country's insistence on maintaining conservative interpretations of Islam, its main religion (See Chapter 2 for more details).

The thematic analysis of the interviews has revealed that frustration with patriarchal practices is one of the factors motivating women to commit acts of violence against their husbands/guardians. Yet the interviewed women expressed different opinions about such practices—while some accepted them, others rejected and expressed their longings for liberation. In a similar way, *certain* women brought to the forefront their frustration with being denied education and/or employment opportunities, and their longings for freedom and independence as reasons for committing offence against those who had prevented them. While the highlighted motives are clear, the causal relationship linking these motives to committing violence requires further clarification. Therefore, this section will attempt to answer the following two questions:

1. Who are more likely to be frustrated with patriarchal practices (such as guardianship laws, polygamy, or being denied education and employment opportunities)?

2. How do such frustrations lead to violence against men?

2.1.   Frustrations with Patriarchal Practices

Educated women expressed feelings of frustration with the patriarchal practices and desire to escape from them more often than the uneducated women interviewed in this study. According to their responses discussed in the previous chapter, educated women are more likely to reject patriarchal practices, and express frustration at their lack of freedom caused by these practices. In contrast, uneducated women are more likely to accept patriarchal practices and view them as ordained by religion or culture.

Among the interviewed women, the educated ones expressed frustration at the guardianship system because, according to them, it constrained their freedoms. They believed the system was unfair, curtailed their human rights, and was a form of abuse. They stated they had felt like being controlled by male guardians. Therefore, they wanted the system to be challenged within a legal context. According to one participant, for example,

> The guardianship system is a kind of women abuse because it treats women as a child or mental people who cannot decide for themselves. I cannot accept this law because I am an adult and I can make decisions for myself (Salwa, educated, employed, polygamy as first wife).

This sentiment is consistent with those captured by HRW (2008), who argue that the guardianship system effectively leaves women being treated as minors. Another respondent, while expressing similar feelings and opinions, also questioned the need for the guardianship system prevalent in Saudi Arabia.

> The guardianship system is a form of abuse towards women in Saudi Arabia. It allows men to control the women, which is very unfair. Guardianship system prevents us from having our rights as a human and has made us slaves in our own society. I just have one question: Why is this system not present in other [Muslim] countries, why is it only present in Saudi Arabia? (Amal, educated, employed, polygamy as second wife).

The question posed by the respondent warrants attention. Whereas it has been argued that the acceptance and prevalence of patriarchal practices such as guardianship is a problem of Islam as a religion, area specialists who have studied the Arab regions have been more careful to note that this is due to the various interpretations blended with cultural practices and power relations within the Arab regions that contribute to the disempowerment of women (Blaydes and Linzer, 2008; Badran, 1996, p. 125). Scholars have noted that the system of guardianship does not exist in many non-Arab Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey and Bangladesh—in fact; these countries have also had women leaders in the past. Additionally, a study by Rizzo, Abdel-Latif and Meyer (2007) shows that non-Arab Muslim countries (Turkey, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia) have a higher level of support for women's rights, compared with Arab Muslim countries. It has also been observed that Saudi women in the past have tried to fight against the practice of guardianship through legal means, but have largely failed in bringing about substantial change (Deif, 2008; Hamdan, 2005) (See Chapter 2). The findings from this study provide further insight into such frustrations faced by the Saudi women, especially those that are educated.

By contrast, the uneducated women in the study were far more likely to accept the guardianship system and express less desire to be free of it. They rather viewed guardianship as a means for them to have a "safe life".

> I believe that the men are better than women and they provide a safe life to women. I have to obey the men because Islam asks us to do that. I respect my guardian in order to be a good Muslim. The concept of liberation comes from western countries to challenge Islam (Ahlam, uneducated, unemployed, married).

This respondent did not only consider submission to men as a religious duty, but also felt that the notion of women's liberation was something introduced by the Western countries and challenged her religious beliefs; and therefore, she rejected it. For this respondent, the idea that she was being looked after and being provided for was more important than seeking liberation and independence from the guardianship system.

Similarly, another respondent, Badreah felt that she had to accept the rights of her husband as these were prescribed by religion:

> I give my husband all his rights as a man and as my guardian. I accept him as my guardian because Islam gave him this right and I am just a woman… (Badreah, uneducated, unemployed, married).

The interviewed women expressed divergent opinions on *polygamy* as well, which is another form of patriarchal practice. The educated women in the study were more likely to oppose polygamy by considering it as a form of *abuse* and violation of women's rights. For example, in one case of polygamy highlighted in Chapter 5, Farah recalled that her husband wanted to marry for a third time. Even though Farah tried to discourage her husband, according to Farah, he did not care for her feelings and decided to marry again anyways. This left Farah frustrated and jealous.

Educated participants also criticised polygamy in general and the way it is practised in Saudi society. They stated that although Islam allows men to take additional wives, this is supposed to be for specific reasons and out of need—for example if the wife is unable to bear children, or if the wife is chronically ill (see van Geel, 2012). However, they believed that men in Saudi society marry second wives because of boredom with their first wife or out of a desire to have sex with another woman. This perception was explained clearly by the following respondent:

> I consider polygamy as a form of abuse towards women in Saudi Arabia. It is unfair, and it hurts women. It is a very selfish system as men enjoy their new wife and forget about the previous one. Men consider polygamy as a right given to them by the Quran, but this is not right as God has only allowed men to marry more than once depending on the circumstances, like if the wife is sick or she cannot have children. My God put a condition on the man who has more than one wife that he needs to treat them equally. But men only practice this system to enjoy themselves and have sex with their new wife. We should challenge this system because it is unfair (Njod, educated, unemployed, polygamy as first wife)

As discussed previously, the idea that polygamy constitutes a form of abuse was also echoed in the studies by Yamani (2008) and Al Khateeb (2007). According to Yamani (2008) a reason why polygamy is so prevalent in Saudi Arabia is because extra-marital affairs are considered wrong; therefore, men marry more than one woman to make it legitimate. However, as expressed by the respondent, Islam does have strict restrictions on men who wish to marry more than one woman, tough they are not always observed. These restrictions are embodied in the following verse of the Quran:

> If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice two, or three, or four; But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), Then only one .... (Quran 4:3).

The verse clearly states that when engaging in polygamy, men should be just among their wives and provide all of them with equal rights. If men are not able to do so, they are only to marry one wife. The participants of this research who were in a polygamous relationship, however, stated that they had been often left neglected and that their rights had not been fulfilled. This contributed to feelings of injustice and anger among women.

In contrast, as in the case of guardianship, the uneducated women in the study appeared to be more tolerant about the practice of polygamy. Farah, for example was not happy being in a polygamy relationship but believed that polygamy was a right granted to men by her religion and because of this she was supposed to accept this practice as a divine right of men.

> Polygamy is from Islam. I have to accept it as my God allowed men to marry more than one wife. I don't know why, but I have to accept it; because, men are distinguished by God Almighty as being more rational and able to act more wisely than women; because, women are weak beings and do not know what to do. That's why Allah allowed men to marry more than one wife to protect women and provide a safe live to them (Farah, uneducated, unemployed, polygamy as second wife).

As these remarks show, the participant clearly stated that she felt obliged to accept polygamy, as she believed it was ordained upon by her religion. Evidence from literature suggests that being a polygamous relationship is significantly linked with mental health problems, lower self-esteem and poor functioning family (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2006). Polygamy has also been found to be indirectly linked with violence against women by increasing stress levels and lower self-esteem in women (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001; Maziak and Asfar, 2003).

Finally, as reported in Chapter 5, especially the educated respondents highlighted their frustration with being denied education and employment opportunities—which can be seen as an extension or a reflection of the patriarchal culture, which allows the guardianship system to have control over women's education and employment—and presented this as a reason for having committed acts of violence against those who had prevented them. They complained that they were not allowed to work or seek education, and that male family members had even prevented their children from seeking education. For example, Ashoug and Layla, who were both educated, mentioned assaulting their guardians, as they constantly hindered them from having a job. Arwa also expressed similar circumstances, saying that her husband did not give her permission to seek employment (see Chapter 5). However, it must be noted that not all educated women used violence as a means for liberation. Some educated women used violence for self-defence.

Based on the responses provided by the participants of this study, educated participants were more likely to be frustrated with patriarchal constraints compared with uneducated respondents. Where educated respondents were likely to considered patriarchal constraints as a form of abuse, uneducated participants were more likely to accept patriarchy and considered this their religious obligation.

2.2.   The role of education in women's emancipation

The responses of women in this study reveal a clear difference between the educated and uneducated women with regard to their perspectives on patriarchal practices. Previous studies examining patriarchal practices in the Arab countries have noted that support for patriarchal practices is taught and enforced by men. For example, Joseph

(1994, p. 195) notes that in Arab societies, "females are generally taught to respect and defer to their fathers, brothers, grandparents, uncles, and at time, male cousins". Being taught these values in an informal education setting and reinforcing them could provide a good explanation as to why uneducated women in particular are more accepting of the patriarchal practices compared to women having some level of education. Therefore, it seems that formal education changes the way women perceive the conditions they live in and become aware of their rights. For example, Soha said:

> I challenge the guardianship system because I am a human being, just like men. I cannot be silent when I see my rights being taken away from me and given to my younger brother. The guardianship system is a form of abuse for women because it hurts women. We are human, but this system forces us to live like slaves and being controlled by our guardians (Soha, educated, employed, divorced).

The present study indicates that educated women perceive abuse differently than the uneducated women. For educated women, abuse comes in the form of patriarchal practices—many view polygamy and guardianship as a form of abuse and do not accept it. This attitude is consistent with the argument made by Tønnessen (2016), that restricting access to employment and education should be considered a form of domestic abuse. Definitions of domestic violence used in the Western countries typically include behaviour such as restricting access to employment or limiting independence (e.g. Kelly, 1999; Home Office, 2015). However, the definition used in Saudi Arabia is far narrower and does not consider these restrictions as abuse. Abuse is covered under the Protection from Abuse Act introduced in 2013. This act defines abuse as a practice or threat of physical violence, sexual assault, neglect and emotional abuse against a woman or a child by a person who has power over either of them. This act makes no mention of any patriarchal practice, limitation of independence or access to education and employment as forms of abuse. Nevertheless, the educated women in the sample consider them to be abusive.

A change in the perception of what counts as abuse also leads to a desire to be liberated from it. Findings presented in Chapter 5 clearly highlight that there was a sharp contrast between the perceptions of educated and uneducated women about the patriarchal practices. Participants were therefore also asked about the importance of education to them. In nearly all cases education was also seen as synonymous to knowing their rights, being able to obtain those rights and a tool for achieving emancipation. For them, being educated represented independence, self-reliance, and a means of freedom. It was also evident during the interviews that especially those women who already had a certain level of education were proud of their achievements. Even though these participants were in prison, they felt that their lives would have been worse had they not been educated and taken the necessary steps to 'liberate' themselves. Mnerah's statement explains the disadvantages of her lack of education on her life as follows:

> I was uneducated, I did not know how to defend my rights and protect my children. This had a negative effect on me, as I was forced to stay patient even when I was mistreated by my husband (Mnerah, uneducated, unemployed, married).

In a nutshell, the respondents explained that it was with education that they became conscious of their rights, gained courage to defend them, and thus were able to raise their voice to some extent and say "NO" to their husbands/guardians. They considered education as a way of obtaining rights as a woman, and also a venue to make better life choices. Maruam's statement illustrates these well:

> Education has benefited me in many ways; such as standing up for my rights. It has taught me how to raise my children on the principles of religion, how to say no and how to say I am a human. Education taught me the meaning of human's rights and women's rights, about freedom and liberation, about how I should treat others around me. I want to say I am a human being (Maruam, educated, employed, married).

Sabah added:

Education has great importance as it leads to proper thinking that is right and safe to live and to be able to attain my rights in this society (Sabah, educated, unemployed, single)

Participants felt that through education they could achieve the necessary capacity and confidence to establish good relationship with their peers and work with them successfully. Participants also believed that education provided them the tools to nurture and look after their children better. Consider Layla's remarks below:

[Education] represents a successful life; makes me a human and an intellectual and helps me to learn my rights and to deal with other in a good way. Also, education teaches me to defend my rights as a human and in society… Getting an education helps me to work with others in a right way and allows me to be independent in my life and raise my children safely (Layla, educated, employed, married)

As these statements show, many interviewees believed that education has helped them to be cognisant of their rights as a human being and as a woman. They also stressed that education has rendered them more courageous so as to reject injustice and break away from the relationships that were not functional and/or harmful for them. The responses of Tafadh and Abeer underline this point well:

Education guides me to my rights and how to get them as well. Like, get a job, and as a result of full independence, ask for a divorce (Tafadh, educated, unemployed, divorced)

[Education] helps me to know my rights and how to obtain them, as well as the rejection of injustice and domination of any human being and ambition for freedom and dignified happy living (Abeer, educated, unemployed, and single)

Education provided a means for these women to understand when their relationship did not work and gave them the courage to speak up against it, and demand that they were allowed to leave the relationship, as they were confident that they would be able to lead a better and more fulfilling life thanks to their education. Although the

Saudi Law does not allow women to live alone without the permission of their guardian, with education, women have learnt to raise their voices against their guardians and even the law. However, the actual experience of respondents suggests that breaking away from the relationship may not have been an easy task and attempts to reason with their guardians only led to added frustrations.

Responses from the participants suggest that education was a key driver in understanding women's rights, building good family relationships, as well as being independent. The participants were keen to use education as their main source for obtaining rights, whether that meant that they are able to seek better legal assistance, gain useful employment to be independent and self-reliant or otherwise. Education for these respondents was very important, and something that they wished to continue following their life in prison for a number of reasons. For example, Njod, who had completed high school prior to being married, said:

> I wish to get out from prison and finish my education to be able to
> deal with others in the correct way and to obtain my rights and to
> not accept injustice, and also to find a job to spend on myself
> because my husband took my daughter and divorced me after [I
> tried] to kill him (Njod, educated, unemployed, polygamy).

Another respondent, Naduah, also expressed a similar desire:

I am waiting to leave prison to continue my life as a liberated human with dignity. I would like to go back to my job and lead and independent life without being controlled by anyone (Naduah, educated, employed, and single)

The uneducated women in this study, however, did not express much desire for emancipation. Their responses indicated that they often accepted patriarchal constraints as simply a part of life. An example of this is Ahlam, whose view was presented in the previous section. Uneducated women acquiesced to hindrances to their independence and yielded to submission because they viewed this as a means to have a "safe life". This finding is consistent with a study by Bazargan-Hejazi et al., (2010), who reported that 84% of the abused women under study feared asking for

divorce because they felt they did not have any access to support. Resko (2010) also suggests that abused women that depend on their husbands for financial support fear that the absence of a man in their lives would lead them to poverty. In such a situation, even though the abused women want to stop the violence, they do not want to be financially deprived either (Resko, 2010). Emancipatory longing, therefore, did not play a significant role in motivating violent acts for uneducated women. While uneducated, and thus unemployed women feel that life would be "unsafe" without men, the responses of the educated women about the importance of education and employment (presented in Chapter 5) indicate that they regard education as a means providing them with the tools to achieve, or at least, to seek liberation realistically.

The educated women in the study stated that they wanted employment as a means for independence and dignity. Employment was viewed both as a means to achieve emancipation (through having an independent income) and as a form of emancipation in itself. Participants also emphasised the importance of employment as a source of income and a means to live independently. Having their own source of income and the freedom to spend on themselves and their children was important for many of these women. Consider, for instance, the following statement:

> Employment is the basis of life because I can spend on myself and my daughter, and I have pointed out this to you many times (Soha, educated, employed, divorced)

Several respondents expressed the opinion that employment provided a means to reject the violence they experienced at home and defend themselves. According to Roba, who was uneducated:

> Employment helped me feel free and liberated. I depended only on myself, I did not need to ask my guardian for help, and I was able to manage my own life. My job helped me to leave my house and meet new people and experience life like a normal person (Roba, uneducated, employed, married)

This suggests that participants valued a job more than just a source of income. According to another respondent, Maha:

> A job is independence, freedom, status and rejecting injustice. I do not need my guardian to help me financially, and I can go out and meet my friends, and spend on myself (Maha, educated, employed, single).

Similarly, Souad, who was unemployed, also felt that employment was beneficial:

> Employment means dignity, freedom, independence and relying on myself without the need to depend on anyone at all and to ask for my full rights (Souad, uneducated, unemployed, married).

This respondent viewed employment also as an important factor that enabled her to attain independence. For example, Salwa stated:

> Employment means independence, dignity and not being in need of others; it helped me to only depend on myself (Salwa, educated, employed, polygamy)

As she described above, Salwa considered employment as a means to achieve "dignity" and being able to depend on herself, not on her guardian. Securing financial independence meant that she did not have to follow her guardian's wishes.

Soha, for instance, explained the reasons why she wanted to work as follows: "Employment is the basis of life because I can spend on myself and my daughter" (Soha, educated, employed, divorced). Similarly, Roaa said:

> Employment means independence, dignity and not needing help of others, this is because it helped me to depend on myself only (Roaa, educated, employed, married).

Respondents described employment with the terms such as 'dignity', 'freedom', and 'status', as well as in terms of having an independent income, being able to depend on themselves, and having money to spend on themselves and their children.

There is clear evidence in this study that career and employment opportunities are considered to be very important by educated women. Like education, the main motive behind obtaining employment and having a career is to achieve independence and relying only on oneself. A study by Dief (2008) notes that Saudi women are more aware of their rights to control their own lives, particularly their right to education and employment. The findings presented in this section, regarding the benefits of education and employment, are also along the same lines. Additionally, the findings suggest that women consider any discouragement against education and employment opportunities as a form of injustice; something that need to be fought against. Furthermore, the implications of the findings are also consistent with the conclusion reached by Tonnesson (2016) that in Saudi Arabia, domestic violence perpetrated by women can result from, along some other key factors, the changing view of women's participation in education and employment.

Abdullah (2007) draws a very optimistic picture of young and educated Saudi women who have such a strong desire to fight for freedom, equality and self-determination that they are able to resist the traditional patriarchal beliefs and practices that have held them back for a long time. Johnson (2005) also notes that the strongest challenge to the patriarchal traditions in Saudi Arabia is the advancement of women in education. This is because education allows Saudi women to focus on the more pressing issues affecting their lives, which in Saudi Arabia, they faced largely due to a male-dominated society (Arebia, 1994). Given the responses obtained from the educated women in particular, there is strong evidence to support Abdullah's (2007) optimism. Additionally, the study also provides further evidence to the assertion by Johnson (2005) that education has been the strongest challenge to patriarchal norms in Saudi Arabia, as education has increased the desire for emancipation among women. Therefore, the findings from this study support the argument posited by Fatany (2015) that the best way to increase the awareness of rights among Saudi women is to begin educating them from a very young age. In this way, not only will women in Saudi Arabia be aware of their rights, but they will also be more likely to want to protect these rights as well, and fight against those that seek to prevent them. Along these lines, some scholars argue that more recently women began to consider

using violence against those men who are in opposition to their rights, thereby perpetuating the existing patriarchal norms (Al Ulayyan, 2007). The following section will discuss how longing for emancipation and desire to achieve independence lead to violence.

Thus, education plays a role in changing women's perception of patriarchal practices and provides them with tools for liberation. This is achieved through knowing more about women's rights, knowing that the way they are being treated and neglected by their guardians is wrong, and through developing the courage to be able to challenge their guardians and say 'no' when they need to.

2.3.   From Frustration to Violence

As noted above, the educated women in the sample expressed a much greater desire for freedom and liberation; and in majority of the cases, they sought liberation from the guardianship system and wanted to be economically and financially independent. For educated women, the guardianship system was seen as an obstacle and something that they wanted to break free from. Some respondents clearly underlined the need to *challenge* those patriarchal practices that constrain them. For example, one respondent stated:

> Guardianship is not a fair system because it allows men to control women unfairly. It prevents the women from obtaining their rights as a human being. We should challenge this system, even if it means that we have to die to protect our rights. We are not slaves in our own country, we are human beings and we have rights (Ashoug, educated, unemployed, married).

Repeatedly, throughout the interviews, educated women expressed the view that guardianship laws were not fair, and they wanted to live without the control of male family members:

> Guardianship system is very unfair because we have to take permission from men to work, for education, for traveling, and even to get married. This system allows men to control the women and

> leaves us with no liberation. We are human beings, but this system
>
> prevents us from our rights (Layla, educated, employed, married).

As suggested in Chapter 5, Layla's view is in accord with the assertion by Human Rights Watch (2008), which describes the guardianship system as the most significant impediment to the realisation of women's rights in Saudi Arabia.

As can be expected, women's pursuit of employment and education opportunities *clash* with the views of the male family members, who, as the participants also underline, actively try to prevent the women from seeking education or employment, in their capacity as their guardians. Participants said that many male family members of their family did not share the view that education was important for women, or that women should be allowed to seek employment as a pathway to independence and self-sufficiency.

Layla recalled:

> My husband's family encouraged my husband to prevent me from
>
> going to work so I can stay under his commands and all their needs,
>
> insults and mistreatment (Layla, educated, employed, married)

As Layla suggested, divergent opinions on women's right to work were serious source of conflict between women and their husbands/guardians. Participants felt that the males in their family had a negative perception regarding female education and stated that men in their household did not encourage education at all. One of the respondents, for instance, who was both educated and was employed prior to her offence, stated, "Men in my house are uneducated and do not encourage education" (Maruam, educated, employed, married). In the same vein, another respondent underlined that the male family members in her household were not encouraging or supportive in this matter at all (Abeer, educated, unemployed and single).

Maha also talked about indifference on the part of the male family members in her family with regard to women's education: "They do not care about our [educational] situation as females and do not help us, they ignore us entirely" (Maha, educated, employed, single). Some respondents further stressed that male members of their

family considered education as a form of rebellion. According to Arwa, for example, "[t]hey see that education for women is a way to rebel against society, a way to not to submit to them but to ask for rights" (Arwa, educated, unemployed, married).

In this context, rebellion was understood as a way to stand up against the prevailing local customs and traditions in Saudi Arabia, as well as against the male members of the household. According to the participants, male family members believed that education would cause women to ask for further rights and freedoms. And, indeed, participants clearly stated that education and employment provided a means for them to ask for their rights and claim independence. However, whilst the women expressed this in the context of rejecting 'injustice', male family members believed that these women were rejecting culture, tradition, and religion; hence they viewed women's education as a threat to their status. Ahlam stated:

> They see her [educated woman] as an insurgent and outside of religion, customs, traditions, and believe that she will refuse to obey her husband and reject the tyranny of her parents (Ahlam, uneducated, unemployed, married)

Another participant, Sabah, added:

They see it [education] as a rebellion against the men of the family. It means violating the customs and traditions [of] the society and to stop them from practicing violence and injustice on women (Sabah, educated, unemployed, single).

This negative perception towards women's education and work on the part of the male family members of the participants of this study seems to support the findings of another study conducted on the male attitudes towards working females in Saudi Arabia (Elamin and Omair, 2010). Their study reveals that Saudi males tend to show a very traditional attitude towards women's employment – that men are dominant, independent, competitive and capable of leadership, whereas women are submissive, dependent, caring and good for domestic tasks and child rearing. On the other hand, studies by Mostafa (2003, 2005) suggest that men's attitudes towards women's employment were moving towards a less traditional stance (Mostafa, 2003, 2005).

Along the same lines, Elamin and Omair (2010) also conclude that young educated Saudi males have a less traditional attitude towards female employment, compared to older, married and less educated Saudi males. In the context of this research, however, the responses provided by the women participants did not yield any evidence to support such findings.

The clash between the strong desire for emancipation among the educated women and the reluctance of the male family members to support them in their pursuit for independence and freedom, by denying them access to educational and employment opportunities, leads to frustration and anger on the part of the educated women, towards their male family members—husbands and guardians. In order to enjoy their rights to education and employment among others (See Chapter 2), women in Saudi Arabia are required to obtain their guardian's permission. In the event that the guardian denies this permission, women are not able to access to the available opportunities. For example, in the case of Roba, as illustrated in Chapter 5, her husband went to the hospital where she was working as a cleaner and asked them to dismiss Roba from her job, which was obliged. Similarly, Layla's husband also threatened that he would go to her workplace and ask them to terminate her employment. Such frustrations did not immediately lead to the use of violence. In some cases, participants did try to reason with their guardians regarding their rights, but they were not successful. This issue was discussed by a number of participants such as Njod, Salwa, Saeed and Arwa, presented in Chapter 5.

Some participants also tried to receive legal and family support, but to no avail. For example, in the case of Roaa, when she tried to register a complaint against her guardian, she was asked by the police to come back with her guardian. In a similar vein, Soha and Weed tried to run away from home; however, the police took them into custody and returned them to their respective guardians (See Chapter 5). Abeer also mentioned being frustrated with the lack of support from the police, saying that even though she contemplated running away, she knew the police would bring her back to her guardian.

These frustrations faced by participants combined with attitude of their guardians towards women's rights led to conflict, largely because participants felt either helpless under the guardianship system or eventually unwanted within a polygamous relationship. Such conflicts escalated to violence when women were unable to resolve them though other means. In other words, these conflicts led them to plan acts of violence out of frustration and to escape the constraints of guardianship or polygamy. As discussed in Chapter 5, some women in the sample discussed planning violent acts in advance and spoke of these acts as "solutions" to problems they faced with their husbands or guardians. Their desire for obtaining liberation from such repressive systems was so strong that some participants deliberately planned their offences in advance so that they could be sent to prison. As discussed in Chapter 5, women that are convicted and imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for any offence cannot leave the prison unless accompanied by a consenting guardian (El Doseri, 2013). Additionally, due to the social stigma attached to the offending women in the conservative Saudi society, guardians generally prefer to leave women in prison for the rest of their lives (El Doseri, 2013). Indeed, the reasoning on the part of some educated participants behind committing the offence was precisely that their guardians would not allow them to leave the prison for rest of their lives. As presented in Chapter 5, Soha explicitly mentioned that she attempted to murder her brother, as she was certain he would not let her out of the prison. Soha is currently serving a life sentence. For these participants, therefore, prison provided liberation from control and subjugation under the guardianship system, and they committed the offence in full awareness of the consequences. Another participant Tafadh also provided a similar explanation:

> I attacked my brother with a knife and now I will be in prison all my
> life. I am happy because I know that my brother will never allow me
> to leave prison. I have access to food and drink here and no one tries
> to control me (Tafadh, educated, unemployed, divorced).

It is noteworthy that some educated women felt more liberated being in prison than they did under the guardianship system. The Riyadh Prison for Women, where these respondents were kept, is a high security prison. They are not allowed to be visited by anyone except their mothers; they are kept in dark cells, and they do not have any

form of entertainment. This is in stark contrast to the high security prisons in the UK, such as the HMP Wakefield provide a number of facilities to their inmates such as access to Open University Courses, a prison shop, gym and a multi-faith chaplaincy (Gov.UK, 2017). Thus, their sense of liberation within the Riyadh Prison for Women shows well their feeling of confinement and frustration under the guardianship system.

2.4. Summary

Patriarchal constraints in the Saudi society contributed to women's acts of violence in a number of ways. Women in the study—especially those that are educated—expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with patriarchal practices such as guardianship and polygamy, and being denied education and employment opportunities. The difference between educated and uneducated women became apparent in considering the role of emancipatory longing of women who committed violence. The responses to this study indicated that the educated women expressed more desire for freedom than the uneducated women. In contrast, the uneducated women were more likely to yield to patriarchal practices. They expressed less desire for emancipation and were more acquiescent in terms of their position in the society, even if they were not happy with it.

The participants saw education as an important tool that enabled them to pursue their rights and take steps towards self-sufficiency. It was influential in changing the perspectives of participants regarding their role in society, leading them to long for emancipation. Similarly, they also placed a high value on employment, and especially the educated respondents viewed work as a means to obtain freedom and dignity.

Emancipatory longing played a role in motivating educated women to commit acts of violence. The women in the study expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the guardianship system and polygamy in Saudi Arabia and the ways they were treated under these patriarchal practices. They pointed out that their male family members did not support them in seeking education and employment, and they viewed employment both as a means to achieve emancipation and a form of emancipation in and of itself.

The reluctance of male family members to allow them any freedom or independence did not only cause frustration on the part those women. Thwarted expectations induced a further sense of confinement on the part of these women, and their persistent desire to break free from the constraints of the patriarchal constraints eventually led them to resort to violence. Much of this violence was pre-planned, and the women interviewed referred to violent acts as "solutions" to the problems they faced in their lives. Compared to the educated women, uneducated women were more likely to accept patriarchal practices, and often tolerated long-term physical abuse that culminated in attempts on their lives. Hence, their use of violence was in self-defence. This is further discussed in the next section.

3. Role of Self-Defence in Use of Violence

For the purposes of this study, self-defence is understood as an action whereby the female offender resorts to violence as an immediate reaction to protect herself. A number of participants in the study reported being subjected to long-term physical abuse and mistreatment (n = 15). Some educated respondents (n = 4) also used violence as a response to being subjugated to physical and emotional abuse. The type of abuse suffered by participants consisted of physical, verbal and sexual abuse. For example, Souad was being beaten, denied food and water, and physically restrained in her room by her husband. Mnerah also reported being beaten by her husband on a daily basis, as did Afrah, who reported that her husband used to beat her and her children. Sexual abuse was reported by Sarah, who mentioned that her father allowed her uncle to rape her in exchange for drugs. Among educated participants, Foz mentioned that her brother used to beat her very frequently and prevented her from eating and drinking. Maruam, another educated participant, mentioned that her husband abused her and her children and always tried to control her.

Souad, Mnerah, Afrah and a number of other respondents described situations in which they used violence as a last resort. They described situations in which they felt their lives were threatened and they had no other choice but to respond with violence in an already violent situation. In other words, they used reactive violence in situations where they felt unsafe, and their violent acts were typically not pre-meditated.

For example, Mnerah recalls that her husband used to subject her to violence, and she committed the offence in response to her husband's attempt to kill her. Badreah also found herself in a similar situation:

> I assaulted him with a piece of metal because he wanted to kill me,
> and I had to defend myself. I did not want him to kill me, and I had
> no other solution (Badreah, uneducated, unemployed, married).

These were situations in which the women responded with violence when they felt they were in danger; thus the violent act was not planned out in advance, but was reactive. This culminated in moments where they feared for their lives and reacted with violence; i.e. they used spontaneous violence, rather than pre-planned violence.

Pre-meditated violence would not normally be considered an act of self-defence, as such violence is not an immediate response to being attacked, but rather a more planned and considered process (See Chapter 5). Some women, especially the educated ones in this study, used violence in response to on-going mistreatment, such as their rights and freedoms being curtailed, and living under the guardianship system or in polygamy. In this context, pre-meditated violence, though a form of abuse, cannot be considered an act of self-defence based on the definition of self-defence used by this study. LaFave and Scott (1972, cited in Crocker, 1985) state that self-defence is premised on the principle that a person who was unlawfully attacked by another should be able to take reasonable steps to defend herself. Moriarty (2005) explains self-defence by considering anticipatory self-defence ("ASD") that might be employed when a battered woman kills her abuser under a non-traditional self-defence circumstance. Pre-meditated violence means that violence is not committed in response to being attacked but is planned prior to the offense in order to achieve freedom from what the offender considers as abuse.

A number of participants committed violence against their guardians while being attacked, which would fall under the category of self-defence as described by Moriarty (2005). Some contextual factors such as a lack of family and/or legal support might contribute to self-defensive violence by constraining the options available for abused women, as will be discussed in the sub-section below.

3.1. Summary

In a number of cases, participants were more likely to describe situations in which they used violence in direct response to imminent threats or actual violence. In such cases, they feared for their lives and reacted with violence in order to protect themselves. Participants also reported being subjected to on-going abuse and mistreatment by their guardians. Additionally, some contextual factors also contributed to these women's use of violence to defend themselves. Most notable was the lack of support received from family members or the police. Many women stated that their family members condoned or supported the violence used against them. Moreover, guardianship laws in Saudi Arabia made it difficult for them to report on-going abuse and seek legal assistance in ending the abuse or escaping their abusers. Therefore, participants felt they had no other choice but to retaliate in order to protect themselves.

4. Evaluation of the Findings from the Lenses of Liberation and Self-Defence Theories

This section will assess the explanatory power of the liberation theory and the self-defence theory on the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia by linking the interview findings with the arguments made on the relevant literature. In so doing, it will hence answer the final research question of this study:

- To what extent do theories of liberation and self-defence explain the motives of domestic violence perpetrated by females in Saudi Arabia?

4.1. Liberation Theory

Women's liberation movement came about to fight the growing injustice against women. The central premise was that women should also be afforded the same opportunities as men, and that it was important to fight all forms of discrimination and injustice against women. The role of the feminist theory is to capture the experiences of women. As a result of the liberation movement, there was an increased number of women in employment, and a decrease in the number of women that took on more traditional roles of housework and raising families.

Education, as understood in liberation theory, is a means for women to understand and access their rights and reject injustice. As part of this study, when participants were asked about what education meant to them, responses from the participants that had obtained education were all related to obtaining rights, may it be for independence and self-reliance, rejection of injustice, or simple awareness of rights themselves.

A key component of women's empowerment, and subsequently, liberation, is women's access and control of their economic and social resources, especially employment (Kabeer, 1997). Previous research established that increasing rate of women's employment was accompanied with a reduction in the dependency rate of women (Vyas and Watts, 2008). This means that employment has provided women with a means of relying less on their husbands, especially in financial terms. As research suggests, incidents of domestic violence are reduced as a result. On the other hand, research has also found that women in employment may also face a greater threat of domestic violence, as they may be more likely to challenge the authority of their husband (Connell, 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Dutton, 1988; Goode, 1971; Greenfield et al., 1998; Hornung et al., 1981; and Kabeer, 1999). The findings of this study support this argument, mainly due to the existence of the guardianship and patriarchal norms in Saudi Arabia. As discussed earlier, the participants considered education and career opportunities very important. Respondents felt that employment was a way to achieve financial independence, freedom, self-reliance, and a means of rejecting injustice towards them (See Chapter 5). The respondents expressed frustration over the lack of support they saw from their guardians in their quest for education, and they considered education as a form of rebellion against the local traditions and practices. Their guardians also held similar beliefs regarding the employment of women. For respondents who were in employment, there were constant threats from their guardians that they would revoke their permission, whereas those that were not in employment were restricted, in some cases physically, from looking for a job opportunity. Participants reported that their guardians, as well as other family members had negative views towards employment, and that their guardians in particular considered the participants' desire

to obtain employment akin to undermining their authority. In other words, education and employment served to empower women, however, guardianship and polygamy in Saudi Arabia frustrated them. The clash of these to ideologies is what lead to a number of educated women in the study to commit violence against their guardian.

In the context of the liberation theory, Simon (1975); Klein, Dorie and Pollak (1950, 2014); Clifford (1976) and Al-Abdullah (2006) have argued that the new opportunities women gained through employment and wealth have given them access not only to legitimate social spheres but illegitimate ones as well and have increased female violence at home. As women became liberated, they attained more masculine characteristics such as being aggressive, pushy, and hard-headedness. Women have learned to utilise crime as a means to acquire success and wealth and thus became more violent. As a result of such masculinisation process, the rates of female criminality both for property and violent offences have increased (Small, 2000).

In the context of this study, however, there is no evidence to suggest that female-perpetrated domestic violence was a result of the participants' attainment of masculine characteristics. It was rather related to their resistance to and frustrations with the patriarchal system. As the participants' responses presented in this study suggested, educated women's persistent desire for emancipation and resistance to the patriarchal system may lead them to use violence against their family members who abuse them or hinder them from achieving further independence. Faced with continuous abuse, and lacking the support of their family members, such women feel their legitimate aims are thwarted, and hence they resort to violence when they do not see any other solution. Being educated, women understand that obtaining further education, completing their education, or seeking employment are their rights that no one should interfere in. They perceive the restrictions placed on them in this regard as obstacles that need to be overcome, mainly because they consider these obstacles as threats to their freedom and independence. As presented above, the respondents' families subscribed to the patriarchal values in considering women's submission to the traditional values and the male members of the household as important. On the other hand, educated participants saw such submission as a threat to their freedom. Such frustrations of the educated women with the system of guardianship and the

prevalent patriarchal norms were only intensified when they did not receive any form of family or legal support. For women with some level of education, this eventually led them to plan acts of violence (for example Arwa, Layla, Salwa, Naduah and Soha) against their guardians so they could 'liberate' themselves from their problems.

4.2.   The Self-Defence Theory

The findings of this study can be linked with a number of past studies that relied on the self-defence theory. Brown (1987) noted that women do not usually kill their partners, but if they do, they do it in self-defence. Having reviewed police records on spousal violence in Canada, Brown (1987) concluded that in majority of the cases it was the battered women that killed their partners. Similarly, 29 out of the 30 female inmates interviewed in another study stated that they killed their partner in response to being abused by their partner (Totman, 1978). Similar results were also obtained in a more recent study by Grant (1995), where all participants (n=13), who were asked about their reasons for committing violence against their partners, described the killing as an act of self-defence. Grant (1995) noted that many of the women interviewed had been threatened with their own life and felt that they had to act as they feared that their own death was inevitable. Polk (1994) also found that in eight of the 12 cases, women had committed the violence against their partners in response to the violence they faced. These findings accord well with the findings of this study when considering the experiences of participants such as Mnerah, Samah, Sarah and Foz as discussed earlier.

However, there are other arguments made in the literature that are not supported by the findings of this study. Strauss (1993, pp. 78-80), for instance considers "assaults by women" as "a serious social problem" and suggests that assaults by women is a cause of male-perpetrated violence. Strauss further adds that in order to end male violence against women, women must play their part and end violence against men. This thus puts the responsibility of ending domestic violence partially on women. It is difficult to see the validity of this assertion in the case of this study. Based on the experiences of a number of participants in this study presented in Chapter 5, it can be legitimately claimed that they were far from being the instigators of domestic

violence. On the contrary, as previously highlighted, even when they were mistreated, especially in the case of the participants with no education, the preference was to be patient. Though participants eventually committed violent offences, it was not their first resort. Some of the respondents did try to reason with their oppressors, but to no avail (See Chapter 5). Having been patient through prolonged abuse and mistreatment, and having tried reasoning with their oppressors, the participants were eventually forced to protect themselves against the abuse and acted in self-defence (consider, the cases of, for example, Sarah, Samah, Hamadh, Bdoor and Mnerah).

Considerable attention has also been given to the battered woman syndrome within the self-defence literature. By the 1980s, it was widely accepted that women who killed their male partners were likely to have been battered women whose experiences of abuse resulted in the killing (Bannister, 1991; Block and Christakos, 1990; Browne, 1987). Battered women syndrome is considered a sub-category of post-traumatic stress disorder (Walker, 1984). It consists of signs and symptoms that have been found to occur after a woman has been physically, psychologically and sexually abused in an intimate relationship, when the partner has exerted power and control over the woman to force her into doing whatever he wanted without regard for her feelings or rights (Walker, 2009; Craven, 2003; Savage, 2006).

Battered woman syndrome suggests that women experiencing abuse learn helplessness and feel trapped in an abusive relationship. Women who are in this situation have high dependency on their partner, fear harm and possess traditional beliefs that do not help in bettering their situation. Additionally, even when battered women make an attempt to obtain outside intervention, they are unsuccessful (Sherman and Berk, 1984). The experiences of a number of participants (n=4) in this study support this assertion. Particularly the uneducated participants in this study were found to be highly dependent on their guardian for financial support. They mentioned having a 'safe life' under their guardians (see the responses of, for example, Souad, Hamadh, and Bdoor, discussed in Chapter 5). They felt that it would be wrong of them to disobey their guardians as their guardians provided for them financially. Furthermore, uneducated women also felt that being provided a 'safe life' also meant that they needed to be patient when faced with mistreatment and abuse

at the hands of their guardians. This was clearly evident in the case of Afrah, who reported being abused and tortured by her husband in a relationship lasting for 15 years. Additionally, Afrah also mentioned developing mental health problems in her relationship due to the constant fear of being harmed. Similarly, Bdoor also reported mental health issues as a result of being subjected to on-going abuse by her guardian: "Violence had an impact on me psychologically and on my independence and made me take anti depression pills and undergo treatment" (Bdoor, uneducated, unemployed, married).

Battering is used by men as a means to control and dominate women, and in doing so, leaves them trapped in an abusive relationship that intensifies over time (Walker, 1984). Such women receive little or no support from society and the criminal justice system, or the local community. Battering thus subjugates women, and it reinforces male ownership and the values of the patriarchal system.

The cases of Souad, Hamadh, Bdoor and Afrah suggest that these participants could not take any actions against their guardians' abuse because of their financial dependency. As a result, overtime, these participants accepted the abuse that they suffered and seemed to have convinced themselves that even under such conditions; they had to remain with their guardians. In all four cases, the crime was eventually committed in self-defence against the guardian when the female-offender feared that inaction at that moment would result in her own death. The behaviour of these participants and the adverse impact they suffered from abuse is also consistent with "traumatic bonding" as suggested by Dutton and Painter (1993). Furthermore, as suggested by Herring (2007), these women could not have simply been expected to escape the abuse, as some women were financially dependent on their guardians and as some participants mentioned, they could not register a complaint against their guardian anyways, as the police asked them to return with their guardians.

5. **Conclusion**

The women in this study expressed a range of motivations for committing violent acts directed at male family members. Patriarchal constraints and self-defence played a quite significant role in motivating the women in this study to commit violent acts. In

particular, polygamy and guardianship laws were major factors in the decisions to commit violence.

Motivations differed considerably between the educated vs. uneducated women, as did their views on various patriarchal practices in Saudi society. Educated women in this study expressed frustration with the guardianship system and the practice of polygamy and complained that these two curtailed their freedoms. They felt that they did not require male guardians and that the system was unfair and should be challenged. They expressed the view that the polygamy amounted to the abuse of women and complained that men did not practice it correctly and abused their rights to take additional wives. The educated women, whose emancipatory desires were thwarted, also considered this as a form of abuse.

In contrast, uneducated women were much more likely to accept both polygamy and guardianship. Uneducated women expressed patriarchal views, such as the belief that men were better than women, or that women needed male guardians to look after them. They also considered polygamy as a 'men's right' and chose not to question it, even though they were not content with it.

The differences in the way women viewed patriarchal practices translated into differences in emancipatory longing. The study also found that women's desire for freedom also varied according to their relative levels of education. Education helped women become more aware of their rights and understand their role in society. As a result, the way educated women perceived their given role in a patriarchal system changed.

Educated women perceived guardianship as restrictive and unfair, and polygamy as a form of abuse. In fact, they often perceived all forms of restrictions on their freedoms as a form of abuse and expressed greater dissatisfaction with such patriarchal practices. Accordingly, they felt greater emancipatory longing, that is, a greater desire to free oneself from what one views as an unacceptable situation. These women described emancipatory longing in the form of longing for education and employment and considered employment to be both a means to greater independence and a form of emancipation and freedom in and of itself.

In contrast, because uneducated women were far more likely to accept guardianship and polygamy as part of Saudi society, they expressed less desire for emancipation. When uneducated women expressed their wish to change or escape from their living conditions, they were more likely to refer to violence and mistreatment, as what they considered unacceptable, rather than restrictive practices, polygamy, or guardianship.

Thus, it meant that emancipatory longing played a more significant role in motivating acts of violence among the educated women than it did among the uneducated respondents. As noted, the educated women who were prevented from studying or working considered this as a form of abuse. They also typically considered guardianship and polygamy as abusive practices. For them, having to live with these patriarchal systems constituted abuse and mistreatment, and they expressed desire for freedom from these systems. This also caused conflicts with male family members, guardians, or husbands, and led to greater frustration and anger. For example, educated women reported a number of conflicts with the male family members over their right to work. Because of the lack of family and/or legal support to change this situation, they (for example, Arwa, Layla, Salwa, Naduah and Soha) ended up using instrumental violence (i.e. pre-mediated violent acts) to end their situations and escape what they perceived as abuse and mistreatment.

For uneducated women, emancipatory longing did not seem to play a significant role in motivating their violent acts, because on the whole, they were much more likely to accept these practices. Uneducated women frequently described situations in which they felt their lives were in danger, and they responded to these in self-defence; i.e. they used reactive violence in crisis moments (for example, Sarah, Samah, Hamadh, Bdoor and Mnerah).

In addition to this, the patriarchal practice of guardianship made it much harder for women to report on-going abuse, especially the abuse experienced at the hands of guardians. Many women recalled their attempts to report abuse to the police, only to be returned to their abusers because they could not do so without a male guardian under the law. This contributed to those situations where women acted in self-defence. Because they could not seek legal help for issues they faced at home - such

as abuse, mistreatment, or violence - they felt the only way they could end the abuse they experienced was through using violence.

Patriarchal constraints (in particular the guardianship laws and polygamy), emancipatory longing, and self-defence - all played a role in these women committing acts of violence. However, there were clear differences in motives between the educated women and the uneducated women. Educated women expressed dissatisfaction with their relative lack of rights and freedoms and viewed patriarchal practices as abusive. They expressed desire for emancipation in the form of independence, education, and employment. Their acts of violence often came after prolonged restrictions on their freedoms by the male family members, or as a response to their husbands taking second wives. For this reason, their motives for committing violence can best be understood in terms of emancipatory longing and rejection of patriarchal constraints.

In contrast, uneducated women were much less likely to reject patriarchal practices. They tended to accept guardianship and polygamy as a part of life and accepted that they had to follow these practices. They did not express much emancipatory longing. Instead, they were more likely to discuss on-going abuse and violence at home, which culminated in their acts of violence against the male family members in self-defence. For these women, the motives to commit violence can best be understood in terms of self-defence—particularly the notion of battered women syndrome.

CHAPTER 7 - TO WHAT EXTENT DO THEORIES OF LIBERATION AND SELF-DEFENCE EXPLAIN THE MOTIVES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY FEMALES IN SAUDI ARABIA?

1. Introduction

There are two main objectives of this research: Firstly, to study the relationship between patriarchy (polygamy and guardianship), female emancipation (education and employment) and female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia; and secondly, to examine the explanatory value of the current theories, in particular the liberation theory and the self defence theory, in accounting for the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. In this context, Chapter 5 of this study analysed the responses obtained from the participants by following the content analysis method and revealed a number of factors that contributed to these women's decision to commit acts of violence against their guardians. Chapter 6 linked these findings with the arguments made in the literature on liberation and self-defence, and further expanded on the ways in which patriarchal constraints (guardianship and polygamy), desire for emancipation and liberation and self-defence affected these women's decision to commit violence against men.

Task ahead is to evaluate the findings presented in the previous chapters (5 and 6) in light of the liberation and self-defence theories as models to explain female-perpetrated domestic violence. Therefore, this chapter aims to answer the final research question of this study:

"To what extent do theories of liberation and self-defence explain the domestic violence perpetrated by females in Saudi Arabia?"

Liberation theory is one of the two main theories used in this study to understand the reasons behind the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. The final research question was set out to assess whether the premises of liberation theory and theories of self-defence can explain why the Saudi women who took part in this study committed violence. The analysis of the responses presented in Chapter 5 and

Chapter 6 suggest that particularly the motives of the educated participants for resorting to violence against men can be explained by the liberation theory.

As noted in Chapter 3, the role of the feminist theory is to capture the experiences of women who suffer injustice, especially in patriarchal structures, and also to present an alternative vision for their liberation (Ruether, 2016). Women's liberation movement came about to fight the growing injustice against women. The central premise was that women should also be afforded the same opportunities as men, and that it was important to fight all forms of discrimination and injustice against women. In order to assess the extent to which liberation theory explains the motives of women who committed violence against men in Saudi Arabia, this section first summarises the main premises of the liberation theory and then compares these with the findings obtained as part of this study (section 2). Lastly, this chapter also considers some alternative theories behind women's motivations for violence, such as retribution, and assess the findings of this study in light of these theories (section 3).

2. Adler's Liberation Theory - Summary

Adler (1973) credits much of the advancement in the change in the social status of women to the liberation movement. She argues that women's liberation movement provided women the opportunity to achieve progress is a number of fields which had long been dominated by men (Adler, 1975a, p.10). However, Adler argues that even though liberation movement brought many positive changes to the lives of women, it also provided them with an increased opportunity for criminal activities, especially in the workplaces. While female-perpetrated crimes were previously confined to the domestic setting and consisted of low-level crimes, women's access to education and employment also expanded the range of crimes committed by women such as forgery and embezzlement.

Adler also argued that the past theories on the nature of female criminality, especially those that attributed it primarily to women's biological and psychological traits, failed short of explaining why women committed violence. She strongly believed that gender roles and societal expectations placed on men and women are internalised

though the socialisation process. For Adler, social factors were more important in understanding female criminality than any biological or psychological traits.

Furthermore, Adler contended that women's increased access to employment and resultant competition with men in the workplace led to the process of masculinisation, through which women took on more masculine characteristics such as aggressiveness and risk-taking in workplaces. For Adler, this was an important factor in the rise in female criminality. He thus believed that increase in the position of women in society would also bridge the criminality gap between men and women (Adler, 1977, p. 102).

For Adler, women's liberation movement would lead to an increase in women's criminality as a result of the inevitable masculinisation process. Yet, it can be argued that holding emancipatory views could also contribute to women's criminality without the masculinisation process of the employment conditions Adler refers to. It was found that the probability of committing crime among women who had more favourable views regarding feminism, for example, was higher compared to those that accepted more traditional views.

Adler believes that opportunity for and accessibility of crimes is mainly influenced by the socio-economic status of women (Adler, 2002, 1975). In addition, due to physical limitations, women may use a weapon or poison the victim, which can help compensate their lack of strength (Adler, 2002, 1975; Roberts, 1993; Leonard, 1982; Heidensohn, 1995; Hickey, 2002; Richie, Tsenin, and Widom, 2000; Nagel and Johnson, 1994; Pollak, 1950; Adler and Simon, 1979; Konch, 2017; Gartner and Kennedy, 2018).

Adler's liberation theory can be divided into four main assertions: Firstly, even though the roles of women have changed over time, there is still the societal expectation that women will continue fulfilling their traditional roles or roles that are dictated to them by the society. Secondly, women achieve independence through education and increased access to employment opportunities. Thirdly, as women gain more and more independence, this will become more evident in their crimes. Lastly, the liberation theory maintains that the crimes committed by women are based on the

accessibility of and the opportunities for certain crimes, that is, that need easy access to their victims and have the opportunity to commit their crimes.

2.1.   Societal Expectations over Women's Roles and Liberation

According to Adler, even though women became more independent as a result of education and employment, female criminality at the time reflected women's frustration with the result of women's status in the society. Although the roles of women had changed leading up to and after the liberation movement, the societal expectations did not, and women were still seen as being responsible for looking after the home and maintain their traditional roles. This resulted in increased level of stress for women and their propensity to commit crimes (Adler, 9175; Heidenson, 1995).

As highlighted in Chapter 2 of this study, the system of guardianship has ever been present in Saudi Arabia and heavily criticised for being a significant impediment to women's empowerment in the country. Although there are no formal laws or decrees that establish the system of guardianship in the Kingdom, Saudi Arabia embraces a conservative interpretation of Islam due to which this practice has received widespread cultural support (See Chapter 2). All 30 participants in the study have had a guardian, who was their father, brother, or spouse. The perception and the experiences of participants with some level of education about the guardianship system were highly negative. As noted in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, these women desired to be free, independent and self-reliant while being restricted by their guardians. The guardianship system in Saudi Arabia treats women as legal minors, and women are required to obtain their guardian's permission to get education or employment. The frustration regarding the guardianship system was clearly evident in the experiences of educated participants. For example, Salwa and Amal, who both held a Bachelor's degree considered the guardianship system as a form of abuse toward Saudi women (See Chapter 5). This finding is supportive of Adler's opinion about the law-abiding feminist women. These participants knew what they were capable of achieving freedom and independence; they were aware of their rights as women and were now qualified enough to be able to lead and independent and self-

reliant life. Essentially, these participants, in Adler's words, knew too much to pretend or return to their former role, one that is prescribed by the society around them.

Majority of the respondents (n=10 uneducated and n=13 educated) believed that the male members of their family, who were their guardians, had a negative perception towards the education of women. They felt that not only did their guardians not encourage education but also considered it as a form of rebellion against local traditions and practices. This supports Adler's argument that the social structures have a major influence on female-criminality. The expectation of the society around these participants was that they would take on more traditional roles of women, such as looking after the house and children. Going against this expectation was considered rebellion, and hence punished. It can be argued that the participants who obtained some level of education (mainly those educated at Secondary, Bachelor's and Master's levels) went against the expected social norms, and as a result, challenged the authority of men, who based on the very same societal expectations were meant to be their guardians.

The experiences of the educated women were similar in regard to their pursuit of employment opportunities as well. Out of the 30 participants interviewed as part of this study, 20 participants had some level of education ranging from primary education to Master's degree (See Chapter 5). Among these 20 educated participants, only 8 participants were in employment. Even though these participants had received formal education, they were not allowed by their guardians to work outside the home. And those who had been employed were constantly threatened by their guardians so that they quit their job. For example, Layla, who held a bachelor's degree, stated that her husband used to threaten her that he would go to her workplace and ask them to end her employment. As women need the permission of their guardians to work in Saudi Arabia in the first place, this, according to Layla, was a substantial threat.

The prevalence of patriarchal norms in Saudi Arabia meant that women have generally been expected to undertake household work as opposed to employment. This was evident from the experiences of participants in this study as well. Half of the

respondents in this study were tasked with undertaking housework specifically (n=15). In contrast, only 9 participants were in employment at the time of committing the offence. This meant that some participants that were in employment were also expected to undertake housework (n=4). Yet, especially for the educated women housework was not as important as having a career. Some respondents even felt that it took away their independence (n = 12). Some others (n=6), especially the educated participants, stated that the patriarchal expectation of undertaking housework as opposed to formal employment was particularly problematic in situations where their spouses were not adequately providing for them and their children. Hence, while they could be employed and provide financial support for their families, they were forced to stay at home and do housework instead, which left them with feelings of injustice. Therefore, experiences of the educated women in the study provide clear evidence that undertaking house work was not their choice and that it was perceived as a form of submission to the male members of the household.

As mentioned earlier, a premise of Adler's liberation theory is that women are generally expected by the society to undertake traditional gender roles such as being a housewife. This becomes a source of frustration and stress for these women who then have a higher chance of committing violence. This assertion of liberation theory holds true in the context of this study. Findings and discussion presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 provide evidence that women, especially those with some level of education, were frustrated with the patriarchal norms that were enforced on them and were not happy with being forced to undertake traditional gender roles. The expectations from the guardians in the family however, were that women should fulfil these traditional roles. This therefore further contributed to the frustration on the part of the participants, especially the educated ones, who felt that the guardianship system was an obstacle that they needed to overcome.

2.2.   Education, Employment, Increased Independence and Liberation

As part of this study, participants were asked about what education meant to them. Participants that were educated highlighted that it meant being independent and self-reliant, rejecting injustice, or simply becoming aware of their rights. Education was

also perceived to help building up courage to reject injustice and breaking away from damaging relationships, as well as empowering them to live as a single parent and be independent and self-reliant. Where educated participants such as Maruam, Layla, Tafadh, Abeer and Naduah among others readily stated the benefits of education, uneducated respondents also knew the benefits that education could have had for them. Mnerah, for example, attributed her inability to protect herself and her children to her lack of education. Therefore, even for participants that were not educated, education was perceived as a tool that could have given them the strength to fight for their rights and become independent and dignified members of society. Similarly, career opportunities were also considered to be very important by the participants of the study. The respondents were also asked about their perceptions on the benefits of employment. The responses received provided a picture akin to that of education, for they stated that employment was an avenue to financial independence, freedom, self-reliance, and a means of rejecting injustice (See Chapter 5). For example, according to Souad, employment was more than just earning money; it was about securing dignity and reducing dependency. Roba, the only uneducated participant that was in employment at the time of committing the offence, stated that employment was a means of liberation for her and that it helped her manage her own life, meet new people and experience life like a "normal person".

A key component of women's empowerment, and subsequently liberation is access and control of economic and social resources, especially employment (Kabeer, 1997). Previous research has established that increasing rate of employment among women has been accompanied with a reduction in the dependency rates of women as well (Vyas and Watts, 2008), that is, employment enabled women to be less dependent on their husbands, especially economically. On the other hand, certain scholars argue that as women become more educated and skilled, there will also be an increase in the rate of crimes committed by women against men, due to the desire of being economically independent (e.g. Curran and Renzetti, 2001). According to Adler, as women became more involved in undertaking employment that took them outside the confines of their homes, and as their levels of education and independence increased, the traditional role of a woman, that of being a housewife, no longer

existed (Adler, 1975). Additionally, employment opportunities also provided access to various crimes, and subsequently resulted in an increase in female criminality (Adler, 1975).

As discussed in the previous section, participants in this study, especially those with some level of education, were very frustrated with their roles confined in their homes, which they identified as a reason for committing violence against their guardians (see the stories of Ashoug, Arwa, and Layla in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). As outlined in Chapter 5, the desire to attain emancipation and liberation emerged as a major theme from the responses of the educated participants. The educated participants in this study had a very strong desire to be independent and self-reliant, and hence wanted to work outside the home.

Education is considered as a catalyst for women's empowerment in liberation theory, as Adler stated that a feminist woman "knows too much to pretend or to return to her former role" (1975, p. 15). In essence, Adler believed that education had helped women understand that they were capable of doing better things, and this led them to be even more frustrated with being expected to undertake traditional gender roles. This assertion is also supported by evidence from this research. In the context of this study, the desire of women to be educated and employed was met with resistance by the male members of their families. Being educated, they understood that obtaining further education, completing their education or seeking employmentwas their right that no one should interfere in.

The restrictions placed on them were perceived to be threats to their freedom and independence, and hence obstacles to be overcome. As the analysis showed, while submission to traditional values and to the male members of the household was seen as imperative by respondents' families, especially the educated participants saw this as a threat to their freedom. The frustrations of the educated participants with the system of guardianship and the prevalent patriarchal norms were further intensified when they did not receive any form of family or legal support. For example, in the case of Roa, who was being denied divorce by her controlling husband, went to the police

to report her husband. However, Roa was asked by the police to return with her guardian, the very person she wanted to report.

The desire for emancipation and liberation was therefore expressed in very strong terms by the educated participants in this study. This strong desire meant that educated participants in particular were focused on ensuring that their rights were fulfilled. Whether educated or not educated, participants in this study believed that education enabled them to know their rights, build good family relationships, and be independent. This provides support for the liberation theory especially in regard to the role of education in liberation.

A central premise of the liberation theory is that increasing employment opportunities for women leads to an increase in the crime levels committed by women. According to Adler, women's liberation created opportunities for committing crimes in the workplace, mainly because had to compete with men in order to hold and maintain higher positions at work (1977, p. 103). It was beyond the scope of this study to test this hypothesis. As mentioned earlier, the number of participants that were employed at the time of the offence was low, with 8 educated participants and one uneducated participant. None of the employed participants were asked specifically about their work environment, as the main focus of this study was domestic crime. However, employed participants reported problems that their guardians had with their employment (see the cases of Ashoug and Roba, Chapter 5). Employed respondents in this study were not independent *per se* - they required the permission of their guardians to work and even so, their guardians could revoke their permission if they wanted. This aspect is not considered by liberation theory, as this phenomenon is unique to Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world, whereas liberation theory, being rooted the experiences of Western women, does not account for such cultural context. Respondents in this study, especially those with some form of education, were committing the offence not because they had increased opportunity to do so, but because they are were frustrated with not having the opportunity in the first place, or being denied the opportunity.

Participants with some level of education were more likely to use violence in an attempt to achieve a particular goal, as opposed to uneducated participants. For example, participants like Arwa, stated that she "did not find any other solution but to try and kill" her husband so that he could not control her or her children. Additionally, Naduah also mentioned that she "had no choice but to kill" her brother so she could achieve liberation (for more examples see Chapter 5). In short, women with some level of education were frustrated with the fact that their rights were curbed, and this played a significant role in their use of violence against their guardian.

This, however, was not the case for the uneducated participants. Women with no education were found to be more tolerant of patriarchal practices and accepted the rights of their husband that are prescribed by religion. Ahlam, an uneducated participant, for example, mentioned "men are better than women and they provide a safe life to women". Similarly, Badareah, another uneducated participant, stated that she accepted her husband as her guardian "because Islam gave him this right and I am just a woman…" Even in cases where the participant was not sure why they had to follow a tradition, they still continued to accept it. For example, Farah was not happy being in a polygamy relationship but still accepted it a religious right of a man. Ahlam was so against the idea of liberation that she stated that the "concept of liberation comes from western countries to challenge Islam". In this situation, women that were not educated were more acquiescent in terms of their roles and status in society and therefore did not use violence in order to change this situation. As will be further discussed in the third section of this chapter, the use of violence by these participants can be better understood via the theory of self-defence.

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it can be argued that education played a significant role in women's liberation in the context of Saudi Arabia. As has been highlighted earlier, educated participants were not happy living under the guardianship system, mainly because they believed that they had the necessary tools to be able to lead an independent life. Uneducated women, on the other hand, were highly dependent on their guardians and did not think about 'liberation' as they felt that living with their guardian provided them a safer life.

2.3. Accessibility of and Opportunity for Crimes

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, liberation theory maintains that crimes committed by women are based on their accessibility and the opportunities available to carry out them. To this end, Adler believes that such opportunities are inherent in situations that are influenced by the socio economic status of women (2002). Furthermore, Adler is also of the opinion that women are inferior to men in terms of strength and therefore use weapons and deceit to compensate for the lack of strength when committing the crime. Adler therefore argues that weapon use helps women overcome their biological differences with men (see also Ward, Jackson and Ward (1969) and Hickey (2002).

Chapter 5 highlighted by a number of participants, whose acts of violence were considered to have a high level of instrumentality or, in other words, they were pre-planned. It can be argued that in these situations, participants waited for an 'opportunity' to commit violence against their guardian as opposed to confront them directly. For example, Naduah, an educated participant, burned the flat while her brother was asleep. In this instance, Naduah had access to her brother as they lived in the same flat, and she had the opportunity to commit the crime while her brother was asleep. On some occasions, violence was not the first option – Roaa, for example, mentioned that she went to the police to report her husband whom she felt was controlling her. Roaa says that the police told her instead to come back with her guardian to register her complaint. In this situation, after not getting any help from police, Roaa planned to kill her husband. Again, Roaa had both access to her husband as they lived together and the opportunity to plan her crime and implement it. Thus, the conditions of accessibility and opportunities in Saudi Arabia can be summarised in two main aspects. Firstly, as a result of the requirements of the guardianship system, some respondents could not use the legal means to obtain the required help, therefore, they had to utilise other channels in order to achieve their goals. Secondly, all respondents were, at the time of the offence, living with their abusers due to the cultural living arrangement prevalent in Saudi Arabia. Thus, their domestic environment shaped their access to and opportunities for committing the crime.

In terms of the use of weapons, it is suggested that women use weapons that are easily available to them such as household items. Findings from the study suggest this to be the case in the context of this study. Majority of the participants (n=18) hit their guardian with a metal or heavy object in their house. 7 participants stabbed their guardians with a knife, 3 participants used fire for their offence, while one participant used medicine and the other bit her guardian. The fact that participants made use of objects that were readily available to them in their house is consistent with the findings of Ward, Jackson and Ward (1969) and Hickey (2002) as mentioned earlier. It is also clear that by using these objects as weapons, the participants overcame their biological differences against their guardians, as suggested by Adler, and knew that they would have a better chance of escape if the object they used actually did harm to their victim.

2.4. Liberation, Saudi Patriarchal Practices and the Use of Violence

Participants, especially those that were educated, clearly expressed their frustration with the prevalent patriarchal practices in Saudi Arabia (guardianship and polygamy) as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Frustrations with Patriarchal Practices

Participant	Expressions of Frustrations with Patriarchal Practices
Amal	"… polygamy is a kind of abuse against women. It allows men"
Salwa	"The guardianship system is a kind of women abuse…"
Njod	"[polygamy] is unfair, and it hurts women"

Participants referred to polygamy and guardianship as a form of abuse and were not happy living under such an arrangement. These practices made participants feel unwanted in some cases and very frustrated. For example, Farah, who was in a polygamous relationship, tried to stop her husband from marrying again but as she said: "… he did not care about my feelings and my rights". Similarly, Njod's husband

stopped her from looking for employment and wanted her to look after the house. Her husband then married again despite Njod's protests. The responses from the educated participants in particular suggested that men were using the guardianship system to maintain control over women. In some cases, men also used violence in order to maintain control, for example, in the case of Weed, who was educated to secondary level. Not only did her brother (her guardian) refused her permission to work, he also beat her every day.

There are a number of studies that show that men are more likely than women to use violence as a form of control in a relationship, or in instances where their authority is challenged (Barnett et al., 1997; Cazenave and Zahn, 1992; Ehrensaft, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Heyman, O'Leary, and Lawrence, 1999; Jacobson, 1994; Makepeace, 1986; Renzetti, 1999). This was also found to be the case in this study. Having obtained education, the educated participants in particular wanted to obtain employment. In order to do so under the guardianship system practiced in Saudi Arabia, they needed the permission of their guardians – which in many cases was repeatedly refused. Not only did the guardianship system restrict opportunities for employment for these participants, it also facilitated the conditions for violence being committed against the participants in a number of cases. For educated participants, having to obtain permission from their guardian to work meant loss of dignity and independence. Thus, their frustrations can be said to emanate from the patriarchal system to begin with. When some participants did seek permission and were then refused, this further added to their frustration, coupled with some participants also having been subjected to abuse. Frustrations were further aggravated when participants did not receive any support from their families or the police, who insisted that to file a complaint, the participants had to be accompanied with their guardian. Finally, when no other solution was available for the educated participants in particular, they committed violence against their guardians.

2.5.   Incarceration as a form of liberation

An important finding that arose from this study was that in the case of 6 participants, the crime was deliberately committed so that the participants could be sent to

prisons. In all six of these cases, the participants were educated. For example, Maha, who had a secondary level of education mentioned that she was "happy in prison" and that she felt "more liberated and in control" of her life in prison as opposed to being under her guardian. Similarly, Tafadh, who held a Master's degree and was serving a life sentence, also mentioned feeling more liberated in prison compared to her life under her guardian brother. Soha, another Master's degree holder and serving a life sentence in prison, explicitly mentioned that she attempted to murder her brother so she could be sent to prison and that her brother would not bother freeing her. The participants' statements therefore clearly indicated that the desire to be free from domestic repression was so strong that the educated participants had deliberately planned their offences in advance so that they could be sent to prison.

For these participants, prison meant liberation from being controlled and subjugated under the guardianship system. Particularly the educated participants were frustrated with their living arrangement, and when sought, could not get any help from the local authorities. By not being able to find a solution to their frustrations, educated participants made a conscious decision to commit violence against their guardians. However, this particular aspect of liberation cannot be explained using the premise of liberation theory. Liberation theory, although it offers good insights to understand the reasons behind why liberated women may commit acts of violence, is generally based on the experiences of Western women. The premises of the theory apply solely to those women that have already obtained greater opportunities for education, employment and independence. The theory has a limited explanatory reach considering the participants in this study. Participants in this study considered liberation not only as having educational and employment opportunities, but also to be free from oppressive systems such as guardianship. The participants that chose a life sentence over a life with their guardians were content to forgo their independence, as they felt liberated from such an oppressive system albeit being incarcerated.

3. Self-Defence Theory and Women Perpetrated Violence in Saudi Arabia

Self-defence has been listed as a motivation by women for committing violence against men in a number of studies. In studies conducted by Hamberger (1997), Henning, Jones and Holdford (2005), Swan and Snow (2003) and Saunders (1986), self-defence was found to be the primary motivation for committing acts of violence against men. The definition of self-defence has been different in various studies (See Chapter 3). Some have defined it as using violence against one's partner in order to prevent physical injury (Ward and Muldoon, 2007; Miller and Meloy, 2006; Flemke and Allen, 2008). In some cases, women used violence after their partner had hit them first, and in others, they used violence when they feared that there was imminent danger (Seamans, Rubin and Stabb, 2007). There were also cases where women had used violence to protect their own emotional health as a result of suffering from physical abuse from their partners (Ibid). Temple et al. (2005) found that 86 percent of the participants that had used violence were also victims of violence themselves.

Another important consideration in studies on self-defence has been the difference between retaliation and self-defence. A study by Hamberger and Guse (2005) grouped retaliation and self-defence together when understanding motives behind women committing violence. O'Leary and Slep (2006), on the other hand, reported that violence by women was most frequently used in "response to their partner's aggression", which could therefore mean both self-defence and retaliation. In stark contrast, Weston, Marshall and Coker (2007, p. 1063) did not list self-defence as a reason for committing violence at all but stated "women perceive self-protective actions as more retaliatory than self-defensive".

3.1. Subjugation to Abuse and Violence

According to Shaw and Dubois (1995), the majority of studies on women's use of violence over the past 15 years were concerned with women in abusive relationships who kill their abusers; thus, women's use of violence has often been viewed as a response to an abusive situation or past abusive experiences. The responses of the participants noted in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 show that, on a number of occasions, participants that committed violence against their guardian did so as an act of self-

defence. This was especially the case for the uneducated women who had been subjected to violence and abuse by the male members of their families and/or by their guardians. The abuse took all forms, physical, sexual and verbal, and in many cases had a negative impact on the mental well-being of the respondent. The table below provides a summary of some of the participants' reasons for committing the offence:

Table 14: Examples of Participants Subjugated to Abuse and Violence

Participant	Reason for Committing Offence
Samah	The participant was being raped by her father in law so she had to assault him to escape.
Afrah	The participant was beaten by her husband so much that she found it difficult to breath. In the past, her husband had also tied her to an electric wire causing burns all over her body.
Hamadh	The participant was being beaten repeatedly by her brother. He tried to assault and kill the participant.
Souad	The participant's husband used to beat her everyday and forced her to live in a room without electricity, water, gas and a bed. He also deprived her of food.
Badreah	The participant's husband tried to kill her

Based on the information in the table above, it could be argued that the participants used self-defence as a consequence of the repeated abuse and violence they suffered from their family and spouses. Being subjected to prolonged physical and mental violence led respondents to commit offence against the perpetrators of abuse. In many of the cases, the participants committed offence out of fear for their lives, and in some other cases because they were highly concerned about the well-being of their children.

For some participants (n = 4), violence was found to be present in the patriarchal practice of polygamy as well, which some of the respondents experienced. In one particular case (Salwa), violence and abuse against the respondent was actually encouraged by the spouse's other wives. It was a similar situation for Farah, where

she felt that her spouse could be violent towards her and then decided to spend his time with his other wife. Again, for Farah as well, there was a feeling that the spouse's other wife would encourage him to treat the respondent unfairly. According to the respondent, being in a polygamous marriage has direct effect on experiencing domestic violence.

Among the uneducated participants, there was an acceptance of patriarchal values and the guardianship system. Even though the participants felt that they were being subjected to violence and torture because their guardians wanted them to submit to their will, the uneducated participants still preferred to be patient and bear such abuse. The uneducated women in the study were quick to mention the rights of their guardians as men and protectors, as they felt that such rights are prescribed for men by their religion. For these participants, the concept of liberation of women was a 'Western' concept that was at odds with their religious belief. In a patriarchal system, therefore, violence by women can be seen as a function of being subordinated and subjugated.

3.2. Battered Woman Syndrome

As mentioned in Chapter 6, battered woman syndrome has received considerable attention in literature pertaining to self-defence. Battered woman syndrome suggests that those women who have been subjected to constant violence learn helplessness and feel as if they are trapped in an abusive relationship. Women who are in this situation are highly dependent on their partner; they fear harm and possess traditional beliefs that do not help in bettering their situation (Walker, 2009).

There is evidence to suggest that in at least 4 cases of the present study, the circumstances of the participants are in conformity with the above-highlighted aspects of the syndrome. For example, Afrah, who was uneducated and who murdered her husband, had been subjected to an abuse during her relationship with her husband that lasted for 15 years. Afrah said that during this time she was patient, as she felt that her husband provided her a safe-life and that her financial needs would be fulfilled. Afrah also held traditional beliefs and maintained that her husband had rights over her, and that it was her religious duty to ensure that she was fulfilling her

rights as a wife. She said that she had developed mental health conditions over time and lived in constant fear that her husband would abuse her again. Even though Afrah was being abused, she kept on being patient and did not react to the abuse for 15 years due to her traditional beliefs and economic dependency on the husband. Therefore in the case of Afrah, all three aspects of the battered woman syndrome were present.

Similarly, Bdoor, another uneducated respondent, described a similar abusive relationship. Bdoor was also highly dependent on her husband financially; she held traditional beliefs and preferred the rights of her husband to her own. She also mentioned that the violence she suffered during her relationship left her with mental health problems and that she had to take medicines for depression and undergo treatments.

It has been established in past studies that battered women who commit violence in response to an attack do so in self-defence (Radford, 1994). Research suggests that male victims often initiate the homicidal act with threats of or actual physical violence (Chimbos, 1978; Jurik and Winn, 1990; Willbanks, 1983; Wolfgang, 1958). This again supports the finding that acts of violence committed by the uneducated women in this study can be explained within the framework of the self-defence theory.

Based on the experience of the uneducated participants of the study, there is strong evidence in support of this assertion. The uneducated women in this study were found to be highly dependent on their guardians for financial support; they even stated that they had a 'safe life' when living with their guardians (See Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). These women underlined that as their guardians provided for them financially, it would be wrong of them to disobey them. Furthermore, the uneducated women also expressed that being provided a 'safe life' meant that they needed to be patient when faced with mistreatment at the hands of their guardians. As a result, the experiences of uneducated women in this study suggest that they had been subjected to prolonged episodes of abuse and torture, which they believed they would not be able to escape from.

Another important motivator for women that commit acts of violence against men is fear. A number of studies have reported fear being a factor in women committing violence against their partners (Cercone et al, 2005; Phelan et al., 2005; Cascardi, Zoellner and Feeny, 2000; Jacobson et al., 1994). According to Hamberger and Guse (2002), women are more likely to report fear of violence from their partners when compared with men. Within the context of this study, participants, especially those that showed symptoms related to the battered woman syndrome, mentioned living in fear of being abused by their guardians. Mnerah, Samah, Sarah and Foz, for example, underlined that they lived in constant fear that their guardians would abuse or kill them. However, what some studies (Cercone et al., 2005; and Phelan et al., 2005) suggest that fear leads women to commit violence in a pro-active manner, was not the case in this study. Although Mnerah, Samah, Sarah and Foz lived in constant fear of being abused, they committed acts of violence only upon being subjected to violence.

4. **Defence of Children**

According to Edleson (1999), estimates suggest that from 30 percent to 60 percent of children whose mothers are victims of battering are mostly likely to be victims of abuse themselves. McCloskey, Figuerdo and Koss (1995) suggest that children that are living with abused mothers have a higher probability (12 to 14 times greater) of being sexually abused when compared with children who lived with mothers that were not abused. Children can be greatly affected by domestic violence, both by being subjected to actual physical abuse and by witnessing abuse, and this can affect the way women react in the events leading up to their offence (Dasgupta, 2002; Foa et al., 2000). Morash, Bui and Santiago (2000) argue that women often become violent against their partners in order to protect their children beside themselves.

Based on the findings of this study, five participants reported what could be identified as defence of their children in expressing their motivations for committing violence against their guardians. Out of these five participants, only one participant, Arwa, was educated whilst the remaining were uneducated. In the case of Arwa, the reason for committing violence against her guardian was that her guardian did not allow her to

look for employment or allow her children to be educated. She therefore wanted to "end his control" over her life and that of her children.

In the case of Mnerah, who was uneducated, her husband used to subject her to violence in front of her children, and on the day she committed her offence, her husband had stabbed her in front of her children. She therefore feared for not only her life, but also that of her children. Similarly, Afrah, who was subjected to abuse by her husband, stated that her husband abused her children as well. Afrah mentioned that her husband used to hit their children in front of her and that made her very upset. Afrah said that she was not initially able to protect her children from her husband even though she feared for their lives; however, now that she had murdered her husband, he could not "hit them again at all". Afrah also mentioned that the abuse they suffered had left them with mental health problems and that her children's mental health was very poor as a result of which they were not able to attend school. In Souad's case, her children had been taken away from her. According to Souad, this had a negative impact on her son, who had been sent to live with his grandparents. Souad mentioned that her son was physically abused by her husband's family and was deprived of food and drink. Based on the experiences of these respondents, protection of children seems to the primary motive of violence among some participants of the study.

5. Retribution

Retribution and perceived wrong-doing has also been found to be a common motivation behind women's use of violence against their partners. In a study by Swan and Snow (2003), 45 percent of the respondents said that they had used violence against their partners to "get even" for something their partners had done. Similarly, in a study by Stuart et al. (2006), 35 percent of the sample of women that were arrested for violence against their partners stated that the reason they used violence against their partners was to retaliate for being emotionally hurt by their partner. In the same study, 20 percent of the women stated that the motive behind their offence was to retaliate for being hit first. Studies have also found that although the desire for retribution was different among men and women, women were more likely to report

using violence in retaliation for being emotionally hurt (Follingstad et al., 1991; Hamberger et al., 1997). This finding was also consistent with the study by Kernsmith (2005) where 42 percent of women stated using violence as retaliation for being emotionally hurt by their partners.

Findings from this study suggest that there was one case where the participant's motive for committing acts of violence can be identified as retribution for being emotionally hurt by their guardian. This was the case of Farah. According to Farah, when her husband wanted to marry again as per his right of polygamy, she did not refuse as she said that it was his right based on Islam. However, Farah did complain that her husband treated his second wife better than he treated her. Farah cited self-defence as a reason for committing violence against her guardian; however, she mentioned that prior to her husband marrying again, she had tried to reason with him, but that he did not listen to her or seem to care for her feelings. Farah subsequently decided to burn the entire wedding place where her husband would marry again. This finding is consistent with the prior studies that list retribution as a main motivator for violence by women (Follingstad et al., 1991; Hamberger et al., 1997). Based on the actions of Farah, it is clear that she felt emotionally hurt and betrayed by her husband and therefore decided to commit the offence, rather than there being an immediate threat to her life. Therefore, in Farah's case, the motivation behind committing the offence cannot be identified as self-defence, but retribution.

6. **Alcohol and Substance Use/Abuse**

Alcohol and substance abuse are cited as a common cause in domestic violence cases.

Kenneth, Leonard Brian and Quigle (2016) reported that alcohol use causes more violence among men against women, compared with violence by women against men. Browne (1986) found that alcohol and drug use were much higher among the partners of battered women imprisoned for murdering or attempting to murder them than among the partners of a comparison group of battered women. It has been suggested that in some situations involving alcohol, the woman killed her partner in an attempt to protect herself or her children from his violent behaviour. However, there is also evidence to suggest that women who are under the influence of alcohol have been

perpetrators of violence against men. Some studies showed that substance use is common amongst both partners. Goetting (1987), for example, determined that at least 37.5% of the women and 44.6% of their husbands had been drinking prior to the homicide.

Yet some others have questioned the extent to which alcohol and substance abuse are causes for domestic violence. Simon et al. (2008), for instance, have found inconsistencies in research on substance abuse and its links with domestic violence. One can similarly question the extent to which alcohol or drug abuse influence domestic violence in the case of Saudi Arabia. Being a predominantly conservative Muslim country, the consumption of alcohol and drugs is forbidden in the Kingdom. If anyone is found in possession of drugs, they can be given the death penalty. While this does not mean that there is no drug consumption or substance abuse in the Kingdom, considering the experiences of the participants in the study, it does not seem to be a relevant factor for domestic violence in general, and female-perpetrated domestic violence in particular. Among the women interviewed in this study, only one reported the involvement of drugs. Even in this case, it was not the participant that had taken the drugs but her her uncle, who subsequently tried to rape her. In all the other cases as part of this study, no use of alcohol or drugs was reported. Even in the cases involving the battered women in this study, participants did not report that their abusers were under the influence of alcohol or any drugs. Hence, this study did not find any link between alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence.

7. Conclusion

As previous discussions showed, the motives leading the participant women to commit violence can be explained to a large extent within the frameworks provided by the liberation and self-defence theories. However, the experiences of the participants in this study suggest that there is a very fine line between violence for liberation and violence as self-defence. The difference between the two to a great extent stems from how domestic violence is defined.

As Swan and Snow (2006) argue, when considering the definition of domestic violence, it is important to ascertain whether the violence committed by women could be

identified as self-defence. They maintain that in cases where the definition of domestic violence goes beyond physical abuse only, and includes denial of women's rights and controlling behaviour, any violent action taken by women who are experiencing this can be seen as acting in self-defence. Along the same lines, Eriksson and Mazerolle (2013) also assert that any undue exercise of control by men over women is a form of violence. In the UK, for example, controlling behaviour is considered a serious part of domestic violence. According to the Domestic Violence Act 2015, controlling behaviour includes acts that are aimed at making a person subordinate and/or dependent by taking away their sources of support and exploiting them for personal gain, or depriving them from resources that would allow them to become independent (Home Office, 2015).

As Swan and Snow (2006) argue, understanding the context in which the offense occurs is extremely important. As noted before, it was clear from the educated participants' experiences that their guardians prevented them from working outside the home to ensure that they maintained control and authority over women. This finding is consistent with Tønnessen's (2016) argument that in the case of Saudi women, access to education and employment is largely controlled by their guardians, and even by the wider family members. This, therefore, clearly constitutes a controlling behaviour under the UK Home Office's definition of domestic violence and a denial of women's right and controlling behaviour under Swan and Snow's (2006) interpretation. Therefore, if controlling behaviour is also considered as an act of domestic violence, then in the context of this study, it could be argued that also educated women committed violence as an act of self-defence. Yet, the definition of domestic violence applied by Saudi Arabia is a very narrow one, and does not cover the broader aspects of domestic violence such as the denial of women's rights and coercive behaviour.

In assessing the extent to which the liberation theory can explain the motives of participants in this study in committing acts of violence, four main premises of the theory were used. Firstly, even though the roles of women have changed overtime, there is still a societal expectation that women will continue fulfilling their traditional roles or roles that are dictated to them by the society. Secondly, as women gain more

and more independence, this will become more evident in their crimes. Thirdly, women achieve independence through education and increased access to employment opportunities. Lastly, the crimes committed by women are based on accessibility and opportunities.

The findings from this study were not entirely consistent with the assertions of liberation theory. Patriarchal practices of guardianship and polygamy are prevalent in Saudi Arabia. This means that in order to undertake education and employment, women in Saudi Arabia require their guardian's permission. According to the participants of this study, male members of their household held negative perceptions of women's education and employment and considered such pursuits a form of rebellion against their culture and their authority. As a result, majority of the participants in the study were unemployed and were additionally required by their guardians to conform to the traditional gender roles of women such as housework. For educated participants in particular, being forced to take on such traditional roles was a source of frustration. They were extremely unhappy with the oppressive system of guardianship and wanted to be liberated from such a system. Frustrations with the patriarchal system were therefore the primary reason for why a number of women, especially those that were educated, committed violence against their guardians.

According to the liberation theory, education is an important driver of women's empowerment. The desire for emancipation and liberation was very strong especially among the participants with some level of education. Having strong desire for emancipation meant that educated participants wanted to ensure that their rights were fulfilled. Regardless of having had education or not, participants were in agreement on the benefits of education in general. Participants in this study perceived education as an important tool that enables them to know their rights, build good family relationships, and attain independence. The difference was that while education increased the desire on the part of the educated women to pursue liberation from patriarchal practices, women that were not educated were more tolerant and acquiescent in terms of the same patriarchal practices. This finding provides support for the liberation theory especially in regard to the role of education in liberation.

However, the main areas where liberation theory is unable to explain the motives of participants in committing acts of violence is employment. Under the liberation theory, as employment opportunities of women increase, so do their crimes. This was not the case in this study as only 9 participants were in employment and none reported any problems at their workplace. Additionally, the reason for committing violence against their guardian was more about not being granted permission to look for employment, as opposed to competing with the male colleagues for top positions. Moreover, while liberation theory focused on crimes committed in the workplace, the focus of this study was the domestic setting. The fourth assertion of liberation theory that women commit crimes based on the accessibility of and opportunity for crimes has a limited applicability for the present study, as it applied only to some cases.

Another important area that liberation theory fails to explain is the reason as to why the participants of this study deliberately committed the offence in order to be sent to prison. This is because liberation theory was formulated based on the experiences of women in the West who do not face a system such as guardianship that is prevalent in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the meaning of liberation as suggested by the liberation theory fails to cover the experiences of the participants who felt liberated in prison.

This chapter also reviewed the applicability of the self-defence theory to cast light to the experiences of the respondents of this study. It is clear from the accounts of a number of respondents that they had committed the offence as self-defence. Furthermore, the study also finds evidence of battered woman syndrome among the participants, especially uneducated participants, who had lived with their abusive guardians for a very long period of time, and up until committing their offence, tolerated the abuse and mistreatment that they faced.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter provides an overview of the study by summarising the research findings, highlighting the main contribution of the thesis, and by addressing its strengths and limitations. It also discusses the implications of the thesis and outlines some suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

1. Thesis Overview

The dissertation had two primary objectives: (1) To assess the relationship between patriarchy (guardianship, polygamy), female emancipation (education and employment), and female perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia, and (2) to examine the explanatory power of the existing theoretical explanations, mainly Adler's liberation theory and the self-defence theory, in accounting for the female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

A central reason for undertaking this research is the fact that Saudi Arabia has recently seen an increase in the number of incidents of female-perpetrated domestic violence. According to crime statistics reported by the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia, offences committed by Saudi women against their guardians and spouses have been increasing in the Kingdom. Given such an increase, it is essential to understand the reasons and motivations behind the female-perpetrated domestic violence, especially in the context of a country where certain patriarchal practices such as guardianship and polygamy persist to this day.

In line with the objectives of the study, three research questions were formulated to understand the main motivations behind Saudi women's use of violence in domestic settings; the role of patriarchal practices, emancipatory longings and self-defence as drivers of such acts of violence; and lastly to assess the extent to which theories on female criminality, mainly Adler's liberation theory and the self-defence theory, can explain the motivations of Saudi women in committing acts of violence.

2. Key Findings of this Study

This research has found some reasons as to why women commit violence against men, especially their guardians. Among these reasons are frustration with patriarchal practices, frustration with prevention from education and employment, and continued abuse and mistreatment suffered by participants. Other reasons cited by the participants include violence committed in defence of their children, fear, and retribution for being emotionally abused. The analysis also indicates that the level of education of women is a factor that affects the motives, reactions and feelings for committing an offence against men. Regarding the process leading to the offence (reactions), for example, the analysis suggests that women with some level of education or employment tend to undertake pre-planned violence; whereas, women with no education are more likely to commit violence in self-defence.

2.1. Role of Education

The analysis of the responses (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) presented clear evidence for the value of education for the respondents. The participants seemed to agree on the importance of education, especially regarding its role in creating awareness about their rights, rejecting injustice, and being independent and self-reliant. Furthermore, education has been found to be a significant factor in shaping the attitudes of women who participated in this study. The findings suggest that educated women diverge in the way they understand abuse and domestic violence depending on their perception of women's rights. While uneducated women tended to accept patriarchal practices, such as guardianship, polygamy, and domestic abuse, women with some level of education objected to these practices and were more aware of their human rights. Particularly the respondents with some level of education wanted freedom, independence and self-reliance, which, in their opinion, were restricted by their guardians. Majority of these informants believed that the male members of their family had negative views about of women's education. Respondents felt that their guardians did not encourage education at all and considered it as a form of rebellion against local traditions and practices. The study showed that with increasing desire on the part of the women to pursue education and lead an independent life, such

restrictions emanating from patriarchal norms became a major source of frustration especially for the respondents who already had some level of education.

The differences in way the respondents understood violence and abuse led them to react to such acts in different ways – just as they differed in their reasons for committing violence, their attitudes towards their crimes, and the way they felt about them afterwards (See Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

Among the participants, the educated women were more likely to commit pre-meditated acts of instrumental violence in response to on-going dissatisfaction with their home life and being mistreated by the male members of the family. Their complaints in this regard included issues such as being denied education and work opportunities and/or their husbands' taking additional wives without their consent. They mentioned that they used violence to change those situations they perceived as unacceptable and a breach of their rights. These women were less likely to express remorse for their actions afterwards, and many of them stated they felt more liberated in prison than they did outside. They underlined that they were aware of the fact that their guardians would not allow them to leave the prison and that they committed the offence in order to be imprisoned.

In contrast, the uneducated participants tended to acquiesce to patriarchal practices and abuse. Many of these women that mentioned the acts of violence inflicted on them by their husbands or male members of the family underlined that it was often this on-going and repeated violence that led to them to commit the violent crimes. In that regard, their acts were more likely to have been committed in self-defence and in response to immediate threats on their lives, rather than being pre-meditated. Unlike the educated women, they were also more likely to express remorse about their crimes, and many of them stated that they were afraid of life after prison because they believed that they would face serious problems without the 'safe life' provided to them by the male family members.

Career and employment opportunities were also considered to be very important by participants in this study. Similar to education, the main motive behind obtaining employment and pursuing a career was to achieve self-reliance and independence.

The guardians' objections to their employment made some respondents feel that their independence was taken away from them, while others thought that they would be unable to provide for their children otherwise, especially in circumstances where the husband did not take care of the children well. Although there was a strong desire to be independent among the respondents, they still did feel that the housework they undertook was part of their duty towards the family, especially the children.

Respondents who were educated and employed (Salwa, Amal, Maruam, Maha and Roaa) stated their guardian constantly threatened revoking their permission to work, which further increased their frustration with the guardianship system. When they were asked about the reasons for committing violence against their spouses, respondents mentioned 'being not allowed to work' as a reason. There is therefore strong evidence that being forbidden to work outside the home affected the attitude of women towards their spouse.

Therefore, it can be argued that women's attitude towards traditional patriarchal practices and values has changed. Housework is one such practice, but as already mentioned, women no longer see being a housewife as an alternative career and desire to have an actual employment. When asked about the benefits of employment, the respondents were keen to state that employment for them was a way of escaping unjust treatment and becoming independent and self-reliant. Thus, with their increasing desire for financial independence and freedom, women challenge their traditional roles and perhaps see in themselves the potential to contribute to the society more effectively than just serving in the house.

This overall pattern of responses suggests that the level of education affects how women (in the study) think about oppression and patriarchal social structures, and how they make sense of their own violent crimes. Better-educated women think and feel differently about their position in society, and this leads them to have different attitudes and responses towards abuse and oppression.

2.2. Explaining violence committed by women through the self-defence and liberation theories

As mentioned earlier, one of the main research objectives was to assess the extent to which the theories of liberation and self-defence can explain the motivations of the participants to commit acts of violence against their guardians. Research findings and subsequent analysis presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide evidence that violence committed by the participants in this study can to a large extent be explained within the framework of the two theories. However, it is equally important to note that there was a fine line between violence used as a means for liberation and for self-defence, based on the experiences of participants in the summary. This difference mainly stems from the way domestic violence is defined. Where the definition of domestic violence includes, in addition to physical abuse, factors such as controlling behaviour and denial of women's rights, then violence committed by women can be identified as self-defence in almost all instances (Swan and Snow, 2006). It is for this reason that understanding the context in which domestic violence has occurred is very important. In Saudi Arabia, controlling behaviour is not included in the definition of domestic violence; therefore, violence committed by women in cases where they have been denied individual rights such as education and employment cannot be identified as an act of self-defence under the Saudi definition of domestic violence.

Experiences of some participants, however, did amount to self-defence in this study. The analysis suggests that the majority of the women in the study faced violence and abuse from the male members of their family and/or their spouses. The abuse took all forms – physical, sexual and verbal – and in many cases had a negative impact on the mental well-being of the respondent. Based on the information provided by the respondents, self-defence was a reaction to the repeated abuse and violence they suffered. In other words, being subjected to prolonged physical and mental violence led the respondents to commit the offence. In many cases, it the offence was committed out of fear for life, and in some cases due to the participants' concern for the well-being of their children and self-defence. Within the context of this study, participants, especially those that displayed symptoms related to the battered woman syndrome, also mentioned living in fear of being abused by their guardians. Therefore,

the self-defence theory provides a reasonable explanation for the reasons for female-perpetrated domestic violence in the context of this study.

In assessing the extent to which Adler's liberation theory can explain the motives of the participants in committing acts of violence, four main premises of the theory were used: (i) Even though the roles of women have changed over time, there is still a societal expectation that women will continue fulfilling their traditional roles or roles that are dictated to them by the society; (ii) women desire to be independent and achieve it through education and increased access to employment opportunities; (iii) as women gain more and more independence, this independence will become more evident in their crimes; and (iv) the crimes committed by women are based on accessibility and opportunities (Adler, 1975).

The findings of this study are consistent with the first hypothesis of the liberation theory. Guardianship and polygamy are the two main patriarchal norms that persist in Saudi Arabia. These norms mean that women need to obtain permission for employment and education from their guardians, who, based on the experiences of many of the participants, already hold a negative view towards women who have education and work. For the educated participants, in particular, being forced to take on traditional roles was a source of frustration. They were extremely unhappy with the oppressive system of guardianship and wanted to be liberated from such a system. Therefore, for some women, especially those that were educated, frustrations with the patriarchal system were the main reason as to why they committed violent crimes against their guardians.

The premise of the liberation theory that education is an important means for women's empowerment was also supported by the findings in the present study. Participants in this study perceived education as a critical instrument for realising their rights, being independent, as well as building good family relations. While education increased the desire to pursue liberation from patriarchal practices, uneducated women remained more tolerant and acquiescent to the same patriarchal practices. Uneducated women mostly used violence as act of self-defence (See Chapter 5 and 6).

However, the explanatory power of the liberation theory is limited, due to the way it defines liberation, which results from the West-centrism of the theory. Liberation theory cannot account for the fact that according to some participants, imprisonment and hence being free from their guardians meant liberation, and that they deliberately committed the offence to be sent to prison. It can be argued that since the liberation theory was formulated in a Western context, it reflects and accounts for the experiences of Western women, rather than those of women who still face patriarchal practices such as guardianship and polygamy as in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, the meaning of 'liberation' as suggested by the liberation theory does not explain the trade-off between freedom and liberation from guardianship that some participants were willing to make. In the context of this study, liberation means being free of the frustrating patriarchal practices prevalent in Saudi Arabia (guardianship and polygamy) as opposed to simple advancements in education and employment. Furthermore, the women who used violence in this study did not do so to act like a man, or that they adopted masculine characteristics, as suggested by Adler. The violence was used to either gain more control of their lives, or to save their own lives. This finding also refutes the claim of Adler theory as previously discussed. Therefore, given the Saudi cultural context, Adler's liberation theory does not fully explain the use of violence by women against men in this study.

3. **Contributions of the Thesis**

This thesis makes a number of contributions to the area of female-perpetrated domestic violence, in the context of Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research contribute to an increasing body of literature about the use of violence by women, particularly in a domestic setting. The present study also adds to our understanding of women's use of violence in the light of the self-defence and liberation theories, by exploring the extent to which these theories can be used to explain female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. The study also highlights the importance of understanding women's struggles, that is, the context of violence against their guardians, which is especially evident when seen through the lenses of liberation theory. The study also provides a contextualised explanation for female-perpetrated domestic violence, which the West-centric premises of the liberation

theory fail to account for findings of this study reveal that the way the participants understood the concept of 'liberation' different than the way it is defined in the Western world. Whereas for the Western women liberation meant obtaining equal opportunities with men, and among others, access to education and employment, for the Saudi women participants liberation simply meant to be free from the restrictions imposed on them by their guardians within the prevailing patriarchal social structure of Saudi Arabia. It is for this reason that some participants in this study considered incarceration as a form of liberation, as they were not being controlled, manipulated or restricted by their guardians in prison.

The study contributes to an understanding of the impact of education and tradition on Saudi women's attitude towards patriarchal practices, women's struggles in a patriarchal society, and how the persistence of and routine exposure to certain patriarchal structures can be a source of high frustration and a motive for violence. The study also enhances our understanding of the differences between the educated women and the non-educated women in terms of their reasons for and the way they approached to their own crimes. Lastly, the study also finds that participants' level of education affected how women understood abuse and subsequently, their choices in how they dealt with it.

4. Strengths and Limitations

This research critically analyses women's experience as perpetrators of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. The qualitative data collection method (semi-structured interviews) is a particular strength of the study. Although data collection through field research is more time-consuming and takes longer, it proves to be a flexible approach and allows for an in-depth inquiry. Thus, the use of semi-structured interviews has resulted in obtaining rich data about the experiences of women as perpetrators of domestic violence. Furthermore, the fact that the interviews were conducted in the participants'(and the researcher's) main language can be noted as another strength of the study as it ensured that there was no language barrier between the participants and the researcher; hence any nuance of the spoken language was accurately captured by the researcher. Additionally, 30 participants were recruited for this study,

out of a population of 150 identified using the selection criteria. This represents 20 per cent of the target population, and therefore is a particular strength of this study, along with the ease of access to these participants.

The study does, on the other hand, have some limitations. The first limitation stems from the qualitative approach pursued: results of the study cannot be generalised to the entire population, which is to women perpetrators of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the study does provide a useful starting point for understanding motivations behind female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the findings also add to the growing literature on the topic, and collectively will aid in a better understanding of why women in Saudi Arabia commit domestic violence against their guardians. Another limitation of this study is that men, who within the context of this study are victims of domestic violence, were not interviewed. Not only was it challenging to identify male victims of domestic violence, but men are in general, and in Saudi Arabia particularly, reluctant to come forward to share their experience of being victims of female violence. As a result, the accounts of women could not be corroborated with the experience of men.

5. Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

5.1. Access to Women's Rights Organisations

The findings of the research suggest that some of the participants who tried to contact human rights organisations, arguably at a time when they were victims, received no help; however, once they committed the offence in self-defence, they were quickly branded as criminals and imprisoned. Therefore, existence and access to effective organisations that can help women who are victims of abuse could help prevent crimes. The study suggests that establishment of such organisations, currently absent in Saudi Arabia, is an urgent need for abused women. Such organisations can provide much needed emotional as well as legal support for participants, especially when reporting abuse by a guardian to the authorities. As noted from the experience of some participants, authorities wanted the participant to return with their guardian in order to register a complaint, which is impossible to do when the complaint is about

the guardian. Therefore, establishment of organisations that can tackle such issues for abused women is vital.

5.2.   Women's Financial Dependency on Their Guardian

This study has found that some participants displayed symptoms of battered woman syndrome, especially participants with no education. These participants had been subjected to prolonged episodes of violence by their guardians, however, they did not complain about the abuse they suffered because they saw their guardians as providers of a 'safe-life' for them. Safety is mostly in the form of financial help, suggesting that it is important to consider the dependency of women upon men, especially of those that are not educated. In this regard, the Saudi government is encouraged to investigate about the dependency of women on their male guardians and take measures to ensure the welfare of women who feel trapped in an abusive relationship and cannot escape due to fear of financial difficulties and demands that come with being a single mother. There can be some barriers when undertaking such an investigation; the fact that women are uneducated means that such information will need to be obtained by speaking with them. If only a survey is conducted, the results may not be reliable as the survey may well have been completed by the guardian himself. Regarding future research on female perpetrated violence in Saudi Arabia, it is recommended that the impact of female financial dependency on male guardians is studied more thoroughly.

5.3.   Review of the Guardianship System

Findings from this study suggest that women that were victims of abuse by their guardians were not able to report the abuse to the police because the police required them to register their complaint in the presence of their guardian. Although it is not required under Saudi Law to obtain the guardian's permission to register a police complaint, the fact that the Saudi authorities persist with this practice, which is emanating from a conservative interpretation of Islamic Law, points out to a lack of proper law enforcement. As a result, particularly in the case of the participants in this study, women resort to violence to protect themselves or to be free of oppressive practices.

Another problem women face due to the existence of the guardianship system is in the field of women's employment. Among the 30 participants in this study, 20 participants had some form of education (1 Primary, 10 Secondary, 11 Bachelor's degree holders, and 2 Master's degree holders). However, out of these 20 participants, only eight were in employment at the time of committing the offence. Majority of the participants with some level of education stated that they were actively prevented by their guardians from seeking employment opportunities. On the other hand, those who were employed outside the home stressed that they faced threats from their guardians, such as revoking their permission to work or asking the participant's employer to end her employment; all of which caused severe frustration for the participants, and for many of them was a precursor for committing violence. Besides domestic violence problems, prevention of women's employment, especially of those with some level of education, has economic implications for the country, and hence should be considered by the Saudi government. While women's participation in the workforce will only benefit the Saudi economy, allowing patriarchal practices to prevent the greater involvement of women means loss of revenue and economic growth. This study, therefore, has important policy implications, especially concerning the guardianship system. The government of Saudi Arabia must take steps to tackle the worst manifestations of the guardianship system in the first instance and prevent the abuse of this system by men. The problems and frustrations that participants faced, and women in Saudi Arabia continue to face due to the prevalence of guardianship are clear, and ultimately the government should work towards abolishing this system. As mentioned earlier, guardianship system is not required under Saudi Law, however, it is not explicitly disapproved of either. The Saudi government should therefore introduce explicit policies against this system, so there is legal recourse for those abused under the guardianship system.

5.4.   Impact of Domestic Violence on Children in Saudi Arabia

An important aspect of domestic violence that needs further study is its impact on children. In some cases, women were subjected to abuse in front of their children, and in some others, children were themselves subjected to abuse. As a consequence, the participants reported that their children had developed poor mental health and were

unable to study. In one particular case, the child was taken away from their mother and subjected to abuse by those responsible for looking after them. As discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 7, the probability of children being subjected to violence is higher among families where domestic violence persists; though this area is covered substantially by research in general, the impact of domestic violence on the mental health and well-being of children requires extensive research, as well as effective organisations that would take necessary measures in Saudi Arabia.

5.5.   Education and Domestic Violence

When assessing the impact of education on domestic violence, especially in developing countries, it is usually theorised regarding the effect of education upon reducing violence against women (see for example Marium, 2014; Noughani and Mohtashmi, 2011; Fancy and Fraser, 2014). The results of the present study, however, suggested that educational differences affected how women conceptualised abuse, as well as their choices with regards to how they dealt with it. The same may be true for women in developed countries, and a similar split between educated and uneducated women may well be observed in countries such as the UK or USA. In Saudi Arabia, the level of education of women ranges from virtually no education at all to graduate and post-graduate level. While in developed countries differences in education levels amongst women are unlikely to be as pronounced as they are in countries such as Saudi Arabia, nevertheless there is significant variation in education amongst the female population. In the context of developed countries, there may be differences between women who left school at 16 compared to women who continued in education up to graduate or post-graduate level. Therefore, researchers in developed countries should consider the level of education as a possible factor when studying how women respond to and conceptualise domestic violence – since in the current study education level was found to be a very significant factor in understanding how women react to oppressive or violent situations.

5.6.   Other recommendations for future research

• As mentioned about the limitations of the study, this study did not comprise men victims of domestic violence. Future research could include the accounts of men (i.e.

guardians in the context of Saudi Arabia) to achieve more comprehensive explanation about why women use violence against men in Saudi Arabia.

• A replication of this study is recommended to incorporate a more significant number of participants, preferably from different prisons in Saudi Arabia. This will allow for a comparison between women from different parts of the country and from different backgrounds regarding the motives that drive them to resort to violence.

• Future studies could also use a mixed-methods design, utilising different methods of data collection, allowing for triangulation of collected data and provide further explanations for female perpetrated violence against men in Saudi Arabia.

• The main focus of this study was to understand why women commit violence against men in Saudi Arabia. These results can, therefore, be compared with studies to be conducted in other developing countries, especially in the Middle East, which have a societal background similar to that of Saudi Arabia.

• This study referred only to the liberation and self-defence theories to understand women's motivations for committing acts of domestic violence against men. Future studies could take into consideration other theories of female criminality, such as marginalisation theory (Lind, 1986) and opportunity theory (Simon, 1976), and assess whether they could explain women perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

6. Concluding Remarks

The main aim of this study was to understand and explore the reasons and motivations behind female-perpetrated domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. The study presents evidence that persistence of patriarchal norms, such as guardianship and polygamy, and the increasing desire for emancipation among women in Saudi Arabia can be driving factors behind women's motivation to commit violence against men. Whereas education and employment may be seen as a method of liberation for some women, this is not the case for uneducated women. Education did not only emerge as a key factor in understanding the variation in the experiences of women in this study but

also a key driver for women's empowerment even in Saudi Arabia. The study highlights the struggles that Saudi women face when trying to access opportunities for their betterment, and it is no surprise that the main source of frustration arises from the patriarchal practice of guardianship. Even though the guardianship system is not included in Saudi Laws, the example of the Saudi society to follow a very strict and narrow interpretation of Islamic Law serves as a substantial impediment to the improvement of women's rights in the country. As mentioned earlier, guardianship does not only cause problems for women in the domestic setting, but it also has a negative impact on Saudi economy as a whole – as educated women, being restricted from partaking in the workforce, cannot contribute to the economic growth of the country. Furthermore, the desire to be free from the system of guardianship is so strong that achieving 'liberation' from it means that women, especially those with some level of education, are happy to suffer in prison rather than being undermined by this system. This is a significant finding, which should be considered seriously by the law-making bodies in Saudi Arabia.

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