

Migration, Islam and Masculinities: Transforming Emigration and Immigration Societies

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Muslim Men's attitude towards Domestic Violence against Women and Children

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive picture of how Muslim men perceive domestic violence against women and children. An important aspect of this overview is an assessment of Muslim men's attitudes towards domestic violence services and what they think about abused women accessing these services. The information acquired in this study is intended to inform providers of legal and social services and researchers about the challenges associated with the dynamics of woman and child abuse in a Muslim community. This can help to identify gaps in policy and service delivery.

51 married Muslim men living in London Ontario filled out questionnaires for the purpose of the study; 25 of them agreed to be interviewed.

The questionnaire contained items that covered different forms of abusive behaviors against women and children. The items were adapted from the Duluth list of ways men exercise power and control over their partners. The last part of the questionnaire items focused on issues regarding child abuse. These items covered different forms of abusive behaviors used by parents toward their children, including physical and emotional violence.

Men in this study associate violence only with physical aggression that causes serious injury. They believe that men have the right to control the financial resources of the family. Most of the participants also believe that men have the right to deny their partners permission to go out, and to accept or reject their friends if they think those friend-

ships would influence the traditional values of the family. According to most of the participants, women are to blame for the violence committed against them by their husbands. They don't consider using light physical violence as an indication of child abuse. It is rather considered an important means to discipline children. For the respondents, the intervention of the authorities is acceptable only in cases of severe injuries caused by the partner's or the parent's violence.

For most men in this study services provided by family violence agencies don't match the priorities of Muslim families and do not meet their needs. According to most of the interviewees, the main aim of these services is to encourage women to leave the relationship, which for them, means destroying the family. Similarly, they were critical of children's services. They believe the system encourages children to challenge their parents and to rebel against their parental authority. This completely undermines the participants' trust in the system and its ability to deal with conflicts within the family, whether between spouses or between parents and their children.

In closing, we see that there is a big gap between how participants, drawing on the values of their cultural background, understand family violence and how it is defined in Canada. Therefore it is useful to take this fact into consideration in the development, delivery and evaluation of any policy or program. It is also very important to include Muslim men in any work related to woman and child abuse especially public education and prevention strategies. The presentation will discuss some suggestions in this regard.

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