

The Role of Social Programs in Saudi Arabia to Prevent Domestic Violence, Compared to Developed Countries: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Prevention of domestic violence should be taken seriously, for it affects families, which are the foundation of communities. The purpose of this review is to investigate and synthesize data from studies to compare the interventions and roles played by social programs in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia with those in some developed countries, notably the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The aim of the review is to identify the differences of the role played by the social programs in Saudi Arabia and those of developed countries, so as to provide information to social programs in Saudi Arabia on how better to prevent domestic violence. The study searched for literature material from Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Cochrane, PubMed, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and grey literature from international websites such as the United Nations, World Health Organization and other databases. Studies that reported on social programs that prevent domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and developed countries were included in this review. The search provided 4568 research studies, though only 20 of these met the right criteria and were reviewed. Despite there being social programs in Saudi Arabia that prevent domestic violence, there is a need for more research on how to eradicate this form of violence.

Keywords

Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, Perpetrators, Policies, Victims and Offenders

1. Introduction

Families are the pillars of communities and societies; hence, respective stakeholders, such as parents, governments, and religious institutions, among others, should ensure that families are well nurtured for the well-being of the family and community at large. Domestic violence affects mostly women and children in a family setting and can have profound effects on them (Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1245). The trauma suffered by victims of domestic violence affects their lives and how they interact with family members, peers, and teachers, among others (World Health Organization, 2014: p. 3; Dugan et al., 2003: p. 172). There are different types of domestic violence, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, control, isolation, trafficking, labour exploitation, and verbal abuse (Alhabdan 2015: p. 11; Cole, 2016: p. 2; Chhabra, 2018: p. 2). The effects of domestic violence range from physical and psychological issues to, in some cases, the death of the victim (Dugan et al., 2003: p. 172). Chhabra (2018: p. 2) states that 30% of women in relationships experience some form of domestic violence globally either at home or outside their homes. A study reviewing intimate partner violence against women in Arab countries reported that intimate partner violence against women ranged from 3% to 40% for sexual violence, 6% to more than 59% for physical violence, and from 5% to 91% emotional and psychological violence (Elghossain et al., 2019: p. 2).

Most citizens of Saudi Arabia are Muslims, and their tribal cultures and Islamic beliefs significantly influence their overall beliefs, norms, and culture. The 1992 Basic Law of Saudi Arabia states that: “the nation’s constitution consists of the Quran and the Sunna, the actions and sayings of the prophet as recorded in the hadith” (Otterman, 2005: p. 2). Most cases of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia are toward women and children (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 20; Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1245). Women in Saudi Arabia are perceived to be below men in status and are required to ask for permission even when they are undertaking necessary and personal activities such as health care, traveling, social interactions and choosing marriage partners (Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1247; Tønnessen, 2016: p. 6). It is even more devastating for a woman to file for divorce as one encounters the gender-biased laws, and a lot of stigmas even from friends because divorce is not well perceived in Islam. Early marriages are encouraged in the kingdom and are recognized as a cultural norm rather than a vice, or a violation of human rights and the law is not very strict on early marriages. Forced early marriages are also very common in Saudi Arabia (Tønnessen, 2016: p. 6). Consequently, older men become more dominant and regularly physically and emotionally abuse women (Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1243; Tønnessen, 2016: p. 6). The abuse includes shoving and hitting sexual harassment, threatening, and verbal insults.

In the recent past, due to factors such as globalization, domestic violence cases have decreased in Saudi Arabia. The gender inequality issues are being addressed, and women and children are starting to enjoy some of their fundamen-

tal human rights. Creating awareness of the need to curb domestic violence and globalization has significantly helped reduce such violence in Saudi Arabia. International society has also played a part in this decrease (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 90; Alquaiz et al., 2017: p. 3). Different global organizations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, and World Health Organization, among others, have advised the Saudi Arabian government and other countries in the globe to curb domestic violence (Alquaiz et al., 2017: p. 5). For example, in 2013 World Health Organization, in collaboration with United Nations Women, had a campaign entitled “Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence” (Alquaiz et al., 2017). As a result, a few policies were incorporated in Saudi Arabia. For example, sexual harassment, both at home and in workplaces, is now a crime punishable either through jail sentences or fines (Shiraz, 2016: p. 343). Several homes and institutions that accommodate victims of domestic violence were opened by the government. Several programs were initiated to offer treatment to victims as well as follow up on the cases of domestic violence.

However, the structure of Saudi Arabian families has neither been affected by globalization nor by the lifestyles of developed countries. As a result, most citizens of Saudi Arabia still hold to their cultural and Islamic beliefs. Both cultural beliefs and the religious text used by Muslims, the Quran, advocate physical punishment as a method to instil discipline so that this form domestic violence still goes on. Cultural beliefs also encourage the attitude that internal problems, such as domestic violence, should be dealt with within the family structure. Hence women are discouraged from reporting when they have been physically or emotionally violated (Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1247). This is because they are often victimised and face stigma, mainly because they are viewed as being eroded by foreign doctrines by embracing western lifestyles (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 95).

The current study will review works of literature that include the role of social programs in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in preventing domestic violence. These countries have different policies, organizations, and laws that are meant to protect families from domestic violence. Although domestic violence is a global issue, these countries have been able to put measures in place that have significantly reduced the cases of domestic violence in their countries. A comparison of the role developed countries social programs have played in trying to curb domestic violence with those of Saudi Arabia will help inform more about how Saudi Arabia can improve the effectiveness of its approach to this issue. The study provides insights into the differences in the roles played by social programs in preventing domestic violence between Saudi Arabia and the selected developed countries (United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia). The content and types of interventions that prevent domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and these other countries and their means of utilization, theoretical underpinnings, and their ef-

ficacy will be compared.

2. Aims of the Review

This is the first study to conduct a systematic literature review of role of social programs in Saudi Arabia to prevent domestic violence, compared to developed countries. The aims of the review are to establish the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia, on the one hand, and developed countries (notably the UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia), on the other; and to determine what measures Saudi Arabia should incorporate from these developed countries to help curb its own domestic violence.

3. Literature Review Methods

3.1. Systematic Reviewing

A systematic review was used in this study to explore the differences between the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and certain developed countries. Systematic reviewing is a method employed to synthesize available literature evidence to help answer formulated research questions. It helps in the collection of relevant information, the investigation of the quality of evidence, the identification of gaps in the research, and the generation of conclusions. This review used methods from Cochrane guidance on conducting reviews and the outcomes are reported according to Preferred Reporting Items for Critical reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines.

3.2. Search Strategy

The search strategy for finding books, journals, articles, and other sources on the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and the selected developed countries included a search in the electronic database of Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Cochrane, and Saudi Digital Library PubMed, using keywords of the topic. The search used search themes that incorporated a comprehensive list of terms intended to account for disciplinary and historical heterogeneity in terminology, and such terms were selected through a multistep process. Potential terms were identified through expert identification, key terms in relevant articles, and published studies, and then the terms were selected according to their ability to find relevant literature. The keywords used include *domestic violence*, *prevention of domestic violence*, *spouse abuse*, *child abuse*, *Saudi Arabia*, *United Kingdom*, *Australia*, *Canada*, *New Zealand*, *intimate partner violence*, and *sexual violence*. This generated results of articles and journals that expounded the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence from Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Using the same keywords, a similar search was undertaken on Google Scholar and the university online library, JSTOR, which generated books, more articles, and journals that were relevant to the topic. Another search using the same keywords was done in grey literature from websites

of multilateral and bilateral donors such as the United Nations, World Bank, and World Health Organization. Face to face interactions and discussions with experts on domestic violence prevention was also of help in identifying the right content for inclusion in this article.

This article used sources that have been published in the last twenty years. The sources that were published more than five years ago were identified when noting the frequency with which later studies have referred to them either by agreeing or disagreeing with their findings. The gap that this study fills is to investigate how Saudi Arabia's social programs can further prevent domestic violence from a comparison with social programs that prevent domestic violence in developed countries. To make sure that only relevant literature featured in this study, the researcher focused on articles, journals, and books that give information on the prevention of domestic violence, and these were also scrutinized through screening. The studies used focused on specific countries: Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. The use of contemporary studies ensured that this article is current and well informed on the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence.

3.3. Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria

This study included all observational, experimental, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods research studies related to the prevention of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The inclusion criteria identified studies that were original, written in English or Arabic, were published between 2000 till today, and met the objectives of the study. Literature materials that included policies or interventions of curbing and preventing domestic violence, gender equality, and family support services in Saudi Arabia and the developed countries were included. Of the more than 4000 sources identified, 2893 were excluded through abstract screening and 1574 were excluded for being duplicated. Twenty sources remained and were employed in this study. The data were synthesized using a narrative approach following the PRISMA guidelines.

3.4. The Reasons for Selecting Specific Countries

This review aimed at comparing the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia and specific developed countries, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It is important to note that domestic violence is a global issue affecting all nations. However, these selected countries have policies, laws, social programs, and organizations that have significantly reduced the number of domestic violence. Laws and policies relating to domestic violence in these countries aim at protecting families, particularly women and children, who are the prime victims of such violence. These countries have invested in research on how better to nurture families and, through their efforts, they have been able to reduce the number of domestic violence

cases. Through various forms such as social media, juridical systems, and women's rights organizations, among others, they have been able to cultivate a society that acknowledges that domestic violence is barbaric and a criminal offense that should be reported to authorities (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 237; Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 43). Comparing Saudi Arabia to developed countries may not result in the country picking up all initiatives used in these developed countries; this is because of different cultural backgrounds and different beliefs between nations in the Middle East and the West. But as a result of this review, additional information will be available on how to eradicate domestic violence through measures that do not affect cultural beliefs, and awareness will be raised of negative cultural practices, which do not evolve with time, that need to be eliminated for the prevention of domestic violence.

4. The Role of Social Programs in Saudi Arabia to Prevent Domestic Violence

One in every three women in Saudi Arabia has experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence in this country is considered a cultural practice that is necessary for instilling discipline (Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1245). When the United Nations issued the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993, Saudi Arabia began taking steps toward protecting families, particularly women and children, and upholding their human rights. In 2013, the government took its first initiative in the fight against domestic violence (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 90; Alquaiz et al., 2017: p. 5). A new law that was adopted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia criminalizing domestic violence against women and children; violators of this law faced a one-year sentence or a fine up to SR50,000 (Butler, 2015: p. 6; Shiraz, 2016: p. 343). The law defines domestic violence or abuse as:

any form of exploitation, physical, psychological, or sexual, or the threat thereof committed by an individual against another exceeding the limits of powers and responsibilities derived from guardianship, dependency, sponsorship, trusteeship or livelihood relationship. The term "abuse" shall include the omission or negligence of an individual in the performance of his duties or responsibilities in providing basic needs for a family member or an individual for whom he is legally responsible (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 95).

The Ministry of Labor and Social Development that is concerned with the implementation of this law created a social protection unit whose responsibility includes receiving reports and dealing with domestic violence cases (Shiraz, 2016: p. 343). The social protection unit, entirely staffed by women, issued a toll-free number (1919) that victims can report cases of violence. In 2018 the country adopted another law against harassment, violators of which face a maximum of five years in prison or a maximum fine of SR300,000. A hotline (999911996) to report cases of harassment was put in place.

The government also created social programs whose main objective is protecting families from domestic violence. These programs are funded by both the government and other non-governmental agencies. They include Al-Bir in Jeddah and Al-Wafaa in Riyadh, among others. These programs are tasked with raising awareness about the effects of domestic violence, empowering women by sharing information on their essential role in the society, and aiding low-income families with financial assistance, among other roles (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 96). The government also started social programs for children. The main of these programs is to ensure that children do not face domestic violence or the violation of their human rights. The National Saudi Commission for Childhood is one of the programs set up by the government to coordinate the different children's welfare organizations and programs. It is also responsible for creating policies regarding the protection of family units and creating programs that address family needs (Topal, 2019: p. 109). The commission has frequently received criticism in that its focus is more on homeless children, overlooking the welfare of children who face domestic violence at home. Some foundations, such as the King Abdelaziz Centre for National Dialogue, started educating and creating awareness on the adverse effects of domestic violence and fighting domestic violence (Topal, 2019: p. 113).

Some studies indicate that campaigns have been instrumental in helping reduce domestic violence in Saudi Arabia. Also, several campaigns have been initiated including a 2013 advertising campaign dubbed "No More Abuse." The ad included a picture of a woman wearing an Islamic veil who had a black eye and the words "No More Abuse" written below. Other campaigns that create awareness of the role of women and children in society have been launched (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 94; Topal, 2019: p. 109). These have had positive effects on women, who now enjoy better rights, such as the right to health care, the right to vote, freedom of travel, and the right to better education (Topal, 2019: p. 104). In 2017 another law that protects the family against domestic violence was adopted. This gave women the right to access services such as taking identification cards, filing for a legal divorce, and owning homes, regardless if they have a husband or not. Women in Saudi can now study science-related courses, such as engineering. They can contest in elections and even be voted into leadership positions in the municipal council (Topal, 2019: p. 121).

Some studies indicate that the Saudi government has started to partner with civil society to protect women and children's rights hence protecting them from domestic violence (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 90; Alquaiz et al., 2017: p. 5). Through these partnership programs, family councils, for example, have been established that deal with domestic violence and have put frameworks in place that resolve family disputes. Some research papers report that the vision 2030 has also played a great role in preventing domestic violence in Saudi Arabia by creating programs whose main objective is to empower women and eradicate gender-based violence (Viotor and Sheldahl-Thomason, 2018: p. 4). The programs are de-

signed to economically and socially empower women so that the country as a whole benefit through the legal emancipation of women.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia faces some limitations that prevent the eradication of domestic violence. The country has long been governed by laws that are borrowed from the Islamic religion and their traditional cultural practices, and these have led to limitations, especially in the adoption of new laws and policies (Alhabdan, 2015: p. 40; Tashkandi & Rasheed, 2008: p. 1245). For example, in 2013, when King Abdullah appointed thirty women to the Shura Council of Saudi Arabia, he received a lot of criticism indicating that that was not allowed according to Islamic laws. Women should not be in leadership positions, Islamic law indicates; instead, they should be ruled. This suggests that though there are initiatives to curb domestic violence, there is also a need first to change the attitude of the citizens of Saudi Arabia to implement these policies and laws more effectively. The judiciary system should also be trained on how to deal with these new laws and policies because even with the reporting of domestic violence cases, there is a likelihood of the cultural tradition of male guardianship being a challenge to prosecutions (Shiraz, 2016: p. 343). The government should also formulate rigid legal frameworks that deal with domestic violence, and although there are efforts to prevent abuse, the legal frameworks should clearly outline all offenses and punishments by drawing clear lines using the definition of these offenses and their consequences. These limitations and the fact that domestic violence cases are still significant in Saudi Arabia, show that there is a need to borrow and adapt some initiatives that have been implemented by developed countries.

5. The Role of Social Programs in Developed Countries to Prevent Domestic Violence

Most studies used in this review that investigate the role of social programs in preventing domestic violence in developed countries report the seriousness domestic violence offenses are accorded. In developed countries, there are more specific laws and policies regarding domestic violence, as well as those focused on gender-based violence and child abuse since most domestic violence offenses are committed against women and children. For example, the Australian government has a Family Violence Act that explains the meaning of different types of domestic violence in the modern world, aiming to capture all unacceptable offenses (Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 43). The Family Violence Act also guides family law systems in how to handle domestic violence, with an emphasis toward the interests of the child. In the United Kingdom, several acts have been adopted to help prevent domestic violence. They include the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Act, the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, Domestic Violence, Crime, and Victims Act, and the Homeless Persons Act (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 235; Sen, 1998: p. 10). New Zealand has specific laws that have been adopted in the eradication of domestic violence. The Family Violence Act

does not limit domestic violence to offenses committed within a homestead but even outside, and it further states that domestic violence is not a private affair. The act incorporates other forms of domestic violence extending to dowry abuse and abusing a partner's pet (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008: p. 1770; Meima, 2014: p. 24).

Laws are mostly followed if there are strict consequences in their violation. Several studies report that in these developed countries, juridical systems are well formulated, and courts are set up that deal with the protection of the family unit. This ensures that the offenders of domestic violence do not escape unpunished but instead face the various consequences embedded in the law. The Australian juridical system, for example, has taken steps to nullify common arguments by offenders, such as they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed the crime. Self-induced intoxication is no longer a defence that will enable domestic violence propagator to avoid due punishment (Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 48). In Canada, there are Domestic Violence Court Programs whose primary purpose is to deal with domestic violence issues, and by working with the victim, arresting police officers, and witnesses, ensure that offenders are sentenced to either jail time or fines depending on the crime committed (Taylor, 2016: p. 16; Sinha, 2012: p. 56). The United Kingdom has the Crown Prosecution Service that works closely with Sexual Assault Referral Centres. The Crown Prosecution Services is responsible for sentencing domestic violence offenders, and if it is a sexual assault case, a medical examination is carried out at a Sexual Assault Referral Centres (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 235; Sen, 1998: p. 10).

Some studies suggest that making easier to get reports and appropriate feedback from the police is another intervention that has helped in the reduction of domestic violence in developed countries. Several pieces of research reported the availability of hotlines in these countries that are always available for victims of domestic violence. In Canada, the hotline number is 911 (Taylor, 2016: p 18), in New Zealand, it is 111 (Meima, 2014: p. 24), in Australia it is 000 (Queensland Government, 2016: p 3), and in the United Kingdom, it is 999 (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 237). Most of the calls to these hotlines are responded to by the police as emergencies and are taken very seriously. The police are said to have some important roles, such as testifying in court proceedings, disarming domestic violence offenders, arresting offenders, and directing victims to the right channels where they can seek more help (Alquaiz et al., 2017). Some police departments are also reported to have initiatives aimed at preventing and eradicating domestic violence. They have partnered with the community, and as a result of this cooperation, have been able to prevent or act in an emergency during domestic violence activities. An example is in the United Kingdom where the police service has Community Safety Units led by professionals who deal with domestic violence cases (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 245; Sen, 1998: p. 11).

The protection of victims of domestic violence is vital. Most of the developed countries studied have systems in place that are intended to protect the victims.

Domestic violence victims require treatment and protection from offenders, and these initiatives are significant, for they make it easy for a victim to report violations without fear of stigma or victimisation by the offender. These initiatives, aimed at protecting and treating victims, encourage even those who feel ashamed or would not otherwise dare to report domestic violence to do so. In Australia, the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme and the Family Law Act are responsible for ensuring the protection of victims of domestic violence during interrogations and court proceedings, and after the case (Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 47; Queensland Government, 2016: p. 8).

In the United Kingdom, several laws and bodies help in protecting victims of domestic violence. The Homeless Person Act singles out individuals and children who require attention and instructs local authorities to offer them accommodation and protection (Matczak et al., 2011: p. 237). The Domestic Violence, Crime, and Victims Act is responsible for granting victims of domestic violence protection and accommodation. The United Kingdom also has a housing program that helps accommodate and protect the victims. The Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence launched in Canada 2017 has an obligation to support, protect and assist victims of domestic violence. Individuals can apply to be granted child custody to protect themselves and their children from abusive partners.

Additionally, most developed countries are reported to have training programs that help in the prevention of domestic violence. These training programs are offered to various people, including professionals dealing with domestic violence cases and the general public. They aim at creating awareness on how to deal with domestic violence from reporting and getting the help one requires. This kind of awareness is crucial to both the victims and the professionals handling domestic violence cases as well as helping create awareness of what is entailed in such violence. In Australia, a program known as AVERT Family Violence aims to ensure that all professionals dealing with domestic violence understand their roles and responsibilities and how they can be of help to the victim (Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 34; Queensland Government, 2016: p. 9). Also, every region in Australia has a family advocacy system that advises and represents victims of domestic violence in court at no cost.

Some programs are aimed at finding more information on how to curb domestic violence. An example is the Canada Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre. The program conducts research and presents data to relevant bodies so that they are constantly aware of the situation and circumstances of gender-based violence (Taylor, 2016: p. 13; Sinha, 2012: p. 50). The Family Court Support Worker Program in Canada makes sure that victims are well advised on what measures are appropriate for them to take and on the proceedings of the family court. A study reports that in New Zealand, a couple of bodies offer required training and constantly keep the information about domestic violence up to date so that the right people can take action (Meima, 2014: p. 23). The Task-

force for Action on Violence within Families has been successful at various programs aimed at preventing domestic violence, such as launching an anti-family violence campaign, developing resolutions against child abuse, and training police how to assess risk within domestic violence cases and conduct comprehensive investigations. The Family Violence Clearing House is tasked with informing both governmental and non-governmental organisations in important decision-making using the data they have gained.

Broadly speaking then, studies indicate that in developed countries, organisations and programs have been created to increase awareness and fight domestic violence. These programs and organisations do a vital job because they offer people the knowledge they need, and also help reshape the attitudes of citizens so that, despite cultural traditions or religious beliefs, they are able to recognise domestic violence as a crime. Canada illustrates well through organisations and programs such as Status of Women Canada and Health Canada (Sinha, 2012: p. 55). The main aim of these is to advocate for gender equality, assist victims with treatment and funds, and create awareness of domestic violence.

The Australian Department of Human Services has similar responsibilities in its fight against domestic violence. The department deploys various forms of interaction with victims by professional workers, including a call or a social worker coming into the victim's home for private discussions. In the United Kingdom, the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which started in 2016 and expected to end in 2020, aims at eradicating domestic violence by creating awareness that challenges the cultural and social norms that lead to women's discrimination and inequality hence influencing the attitude of individuals towards domestic violence (Queensland Government, 2016: p. 1). In New Zealand, Family Violence Prevention aims at eradicating domestic violence through a participatory approach, in which various stakeholders, such as leaders and community members, come together and form strategies on how to create awareness to eradicate domestic violence as well as how to transform mentalities on gender inequality and domestic violence (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008: p. 1770; Meima, 2014: p. 26).

6. Discussion of Findings

Going through the outcomes of this review, the seriousness with which domestic violence is taken in developing countries is apparent. Saudi Arabia must incorporate the same kind of seriousness if they want to curb its own levels of domestic violence. It should start by re-examining its laws against domestic violence and by defining and clearly outlining the different types of violations that relate to domestic violence (Markus & Sandison, 2018: p. 43; Meima, 2014: p. 24; World Health Organization, 2009: p. 9). It should incorporate violations such as rape, which is not currently included in its laws and policies, even though sexual harassment is a major form of domestic violence. The Saudi government should also formulate a well-trained justiciable system whose main objectives are to

protect family units and fight against domestic violence. The justice system should be keen, particularly where children's interests are involved, and should offer protection to the victims of domestic violence. The offenders should be aware of the serious consequences so that they are deterred from engaging in this crime.

Both non-governmental organizations and the government should formulate strategies and ways to protect victims and provide them with the treatment they need (Queensland Government, 2016). Bearing in mind that the fight against domestic violence is a new ideology in Saudi society and that victims continually face discrimination and stigma; it is crucial that measures be put in place that protect victims. Current cultural practices discourage reporting of domestic issues and claim they should be resolved within the family. Protecting victims will encourage others, who feel ashamed or afraid of victimisation, to come forward and report. The protection and treatment of victims are vital (Alquaiz et al., 2017) especially in a nation where abusing spouses feel that their victims are unequal to them and deserve physical punishments to instil discipline. Protection shelters for victims should also be made available for victims, especially for children and women who are at risk of domestic violence.

Additionally, more programs and more organisations should be tasked with the responsibility of creating awareness against domestic violence. Citizens of Saudi Arabia should continuously be reminded of the consequences of domestic violence, the role of women and children in society, gender equality, and harmful cultural practices that diminish women and children rights in the community. Through these initiatives, the attitude towards domestic violence will change from being a regulation of the Quran and cultural practices to a violation of human rights (World Health Organization, 2009: p. 6). Creating awareness will also encourage more women who are undergoing mistreatments to put an end to it and seek the proper treatment they deserve (Maczak et al., 2011: p. 237).

Saudi Arabia should consider having training programs for professionals dealing with domestic violence such as the police, social workers, advocates, and magistrates (Alquaiz et al., 2017). When professionals know what is required of them and thoroughly understand their roles and responsibilities, they will be able to execute their tasks and help the victims as well as apprehend the offenders. Specialised training should be given to the police service as they are most often the first responders when an emergency arises. All police officers in Saudi Arabia should be able to deal with cases of violence as well as knowhow to help victims or instruct them on where to get the right help. Ways of dealing with domestic violence should also be public knowledge so that victims are aware of the right channels to follow and how they can receive the assistance they need.

7. Conclusion

According to this review, there is much that the Saudi Arabia government and social programs should incorporate in their fight against domestic violence. The

government should be concerned with the protection of family units because citizens are nurtured within the family, and if children grow up traumatised, there is a high likelihood they may be troublesome in the future, or they may also commit suicide among other serious consequences. Saudi Arabia has taken several initiatives in preventing domestic violence, such as adopting new laws that punish abusers and support victims, helped initiate some programs that help eradicate domestic violence, and launched anti-domestic violence campaigns. However, the Kingdom should consider taking up more measures, such as adopting more detailed laws and policies and ensuring that the justice system adheres and implements them. Saudi Arabia should also foster more channels to create awareness of fighting domestic violence because Saudi citizens must adopt a new attitude towards this problem. They should stop considering it as the advocated physical punishment by the Quran and their cultural belief but as a violation of human rights. There is so much that social programs and the Saudi Arabian government can borrow from developed countries used in this review in the fight against domestic violence.

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Contribution

Data collection, design, analysis and interpretation were done by Alsehaimi A. Drafting, critical revisions were done by Alsehaimi, A. and Ibrahim El Husseiny Helal.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors have any conflict of interest with the material of this manuscript.

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