

## **Questionnaire Report**

### **Introduction**

At Nour, we decided to design a questionnaire for our own understanding of Domestic Violence (DV) in the Muslim community. The primary scope of this study was to understand the stereotypes that were common amongst the public in regards to the anti-sentimental feelings of Islam in correlation with domestic violence. Furthermore, the design of this research was also intended to help us identify how prevalent DV is in the Muslim community and the nature of any help that a DV victim would like available and accessible to them.

### *Design*

The design of this study was an independent groups design, where many variables including age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, marital status and religion were measured.

### *Participants*

Opportunity and snowball sampling techniques were used to obtain our participants. The questionnaires were distributed via electronic means as well as hardcopies for those who did not have access to the internet or preferred to have greater anonymity. Participants were drawn from the general population. Participants' ages ranged between 18-40 plus; 78 males and 209 females volunteered, thus an overall number of 287 participants.

Participants' details are described as follows:

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Age group	Number of participants
18 – 20	78
21 – 24	91
25 – 29	43
30 – 39	55
40+	20

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Furthermore, marital status was an important variable in this research analysis, so a greater emphasis was placed in determining trends and patterns from the data collected. In our study 199 participants were single, 61 married, 21 divorced, 5 separated and 1 participant did not

state their marital status. In addition, the vast majority of the participants were from the Islamic faith (281). 5 participants belonged to the Christian faith of which one participant described themselves as apostolic and the remaining 4 did not give any detail about which denomination they belonged to. Only 1 participant described themselves as secular.

**Results**

It was important for us to understand how prevalent DV was in our community. An overwhelming figure of 56.4% of our Nour participants had witnessed DV. 43.6% stated they had not witnessed DV.

We asked our participants why they felt it was difficult for victims to leave a relationship that is violent:

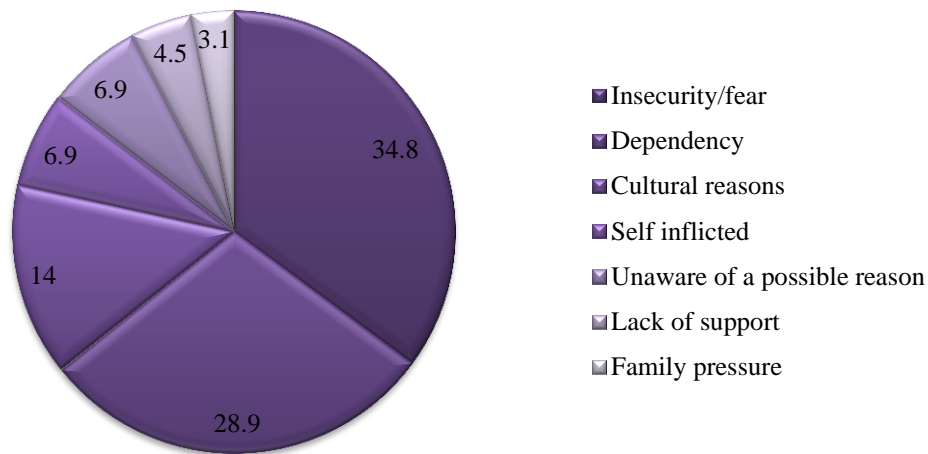


Fig. 1 Our study showed that victims found it difficult to leave violent relationships due to; insecurity/fear – 34.8% (which 52% stated they had witnessed DV and 48% had not), dependency – 28.9% (which 55.4% stated they had witnessed DV and 44.6% had not), cultural reasons – 14% (of which 52.4% stated they had witnessed DV and 47.6% had not), self inflicted – 6.9% (which 75% stated they had witnessed DV and 25% had not), unaware of a possible reason – 6.9% (which 50% stated they had witnessed DV and 50% had not), lack of support – 4.5% (which 69.2% stated they had witnessed DV and 30.6% had not), family pressure – 3.1% (which 77.8% stated they had witnessed DV and 22.2% had not). Total participants in this study were 287.

These results show that the public believe the most common reasons as to why victims remain in a violent relationship is due to feelings of insecurity or fear and due to dependency upon one’s spouse. Cultural impacts also play a large role in this decision. Our participants who had first hand witnessing of DV took the majority votes on all those categories (except for those who were unaware – equal percentage)

The 56.4% of participants who stated they witnessed DV indicated just how prevalent DV really is. If this is the statistic produced from this small study, then it is worrying to imagine what the statistics will show had the population (50million) of England been asked to participate in such a study.

An additional but equally important aim of this study which is valuable for an organisation possessing the aims which Nour have; was to assess if there were any shared views about DV and Islam and in particular, if they felt that Islam advocated domestic violence. Only 5.2% of participants stated that Islam advocated DV (only 1 participant was a non-Muslim who shared this view) 80.5% had stated this not to be true, a further 11.5% had stated that Islamic teachings had been misinterpreted to suggest that Islam advocated DV and a remaining 2.8% stated that they did not know if Islam advocated domestic violence.

Although only a small percentage of participants had a negative view that Islam advocated DV, we do not feel that this is representative of common attitudes in the general public as the majority of the participants in this study were of the Muslim faith, thus we believe this percentage may actually be significantly higher. We also believe this may unfortunately be a significantly greater figure than shown here. 11% of participants stated that Islamic teachings were being wrongly misinterpreted to advocate DV, and part of the work which we wish to undertake at Nour will be to eradicate these misconceptions and use the teachings of Islam as a tool to abolish DV rather than to teach that Islam advocates DV.

The role of Nour would essentially be to raise awareness that Islam does not advocate DV but rather condemns it and to strongly iterate that DV has no place in Islam. Initially, Nour will be a platform to which we will organise talks/seminars and address the Muslim communities through different Mosques in order to re-educate the Muslim community on this prevalent yet silent issue of DV. We wish to use Islam to eradicate the belief that DV is permissible in context of Islam.

We also asked our participants what they believed to be the cause of DV:

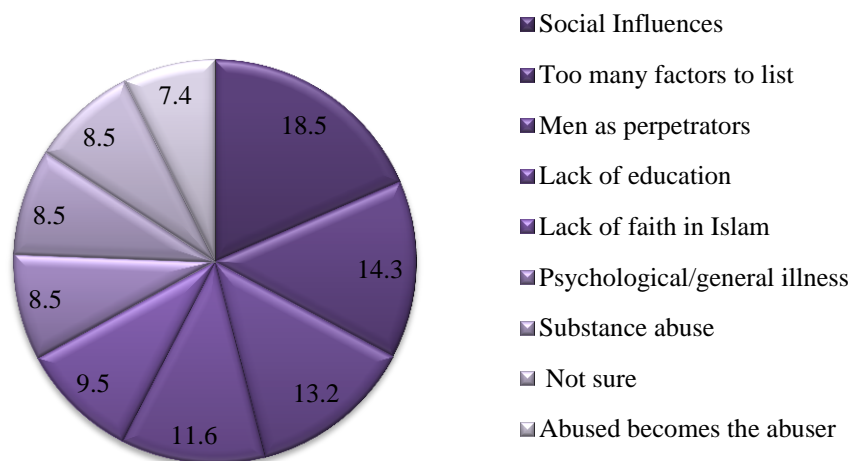


Fig. 2 Our study showed that participants believed the cause of DV was due to; social influences – 18.5% (of which 51.4% stated they had witnessed DV and 48.6% had not), 14.3% stated that there were multiple factors rather than one single cause of DV, men being the offenders – 13.2% (of which 60% stated they had witnessed DV and 40% had not), lack of education – 11.6% (of which 54.5% stated they had witnessed DV and 45.5% had not), lack of faith in Islam – 9.5% (of which 50% stated they had witnessed DV and 50% had not), psychological/general illness – 8.5% (of which 50% stated they had witnessed DV and 50% had not), drug/alcohol abuse – 8.5% (of which 50% stated they had witnessed DV and 50% had not), 8.5% had stated that they did not know (of which 31.3% stated they had witnessed DV and 68.7% had not) and a further 7.4% believed it was due to the abused becomes the abuser (of which 71.4% stated they had witnessed DV and 28.6% had not). Total participants in this study were 287.

From this we can see the largest factor to what causes domestic violence as concluded by the participants are the social influences, which included cultural impact, lack of education and men deemed as the offenders. This suggests that education and raising awareness is an important element of the work which will be undertaken by Nour, which must be delivered in order to teach people to differentiate between the actual as opposed to the skewed teachings of Islam and that DV is not permitted by Islam but strongly condemned.

Though men are often the offenders, this does not remove the possibility that they can equally be a victim of DV. It is a common misconception that DV victims are always females, but at Nour we would like to help all victims of DV; regardless of gender and thus would like to raise awareness that men can also suffer from DV too. 80.1% of participants stated that men can be victims of DV (2.4% said no, 14.1% believed it to occur rarely and 3.1% said it may be possible). This shows there are a large number of people who acknowledge that men can be victims, and at Nour we will ensure not to victimise females only, but also tackle DV from the opposite side.

The majority of our participants were unaware of an existing organisation to help victims of DV (56.8%). The results showed that those participants in the 25 – 40+ age range were more unaware of an organisation which help victims of DV when compared to those in the 18 – 24 age group (23.7% of our participants compared to the 17.1% from the 25 – 40+ age group who were aware of any organisations. This group made 40.8% of our sample).

This suggests that the elder generation are less aware about the help they are entitled to. From these results, we have learnt that awareness of our organisation should be given great emphasis, alongside campaigning and media coverage to ensure we reach out and stamp our existence to many of the public.

Lastly, we asked our participants what kind of help they feel would be of most beneficial to victims of DV. Some of the suggestions we received were:

“There is not enough media exposure on DV via newspapers and radio channels is a necessity. Advertisement on the television during prime time can make people more aware. Leaflets in GP’s, local communities, prayer centres can help promote this.”

“Every Mosque should have Imams willing to help. Help the sisters when things get tough and provide support to the family.”

“The beauty and purity of Islamic teachings about the treatment of women “Paradise is under the feet of the mother” is one thing that drew me to research Islam. It is not the religion; it is the people who have warped the perceptions and teachings. This misinterpretation must be tackled.”

“Provide relevant courses for newly wedded or about potential married couples.”

“Make all women aware of their options when in an abusive relationship. Inform them there is no harm or shame in reporting it and seeking help.”

“DV is a crime and is also an Islamic crime and this message needs to go out. Campaigns against domestic violence need to be carried out on Islamic channels and other relevant channels. Community attitude must change.”

“Much more education is needed in order to inform the victims of the resources that are available for them.”

We will ensure that our work at Nour reflects the suggestions that have been given to us and that we can meet these targets. The aim of this study was to obtain ideas and suggestions from the community. We feel due to the majority of our participants having previously witnessed DV their input and their suggestions are vital and have been taken on board.

### **Discussion**

The current study aimed to cover a range of topics to help Nour with a starting point as well as a guided path to follow. A range of interesting data had been collected from this study, which has allowed us to develop specific focal points.

It was important in our study that we gathered the views of DV from non-victims and victims alike, and this included the community of whom we were targeting. Obtaining their views, opinions and suggestions were of great importance as it gave us an outline of what is being sought and what needs to be addressed. From our findings, it is clear that there can never be enough organisations which tackle this issue.

Of course the study has limitations which will be discussed, but we feel that rather than using this study to quote facts, it is more important to use this study to help mould Nour into an organisation which will be of the utmost beneficial to the target population.

### ***Methodological issues***

As the means of obtaining our participants was via snowball and opportunity sampling, it was fairly difficult to get equal numbers of participants which were male and female, of the delegated age groups and of varying religions/ethnicities. The results retrieved clearly show there to be far more female participants than male. Though it would have been interesting to see how views and suggestions would have varied between genders, this was not the sole purpose of the study, thus we believe the data obtained is relevant. The questions asked were not based on gender differences nor were they gender biased, therefore the information obtained were generalised to the wider population.

Also, because it was opportunity sampling, the age ranges were not equally filled. However as nearly 30% of our participants were over the age of 30 we feel the result obtained still showed great variation between the young and older ages, giving us a stepping stone to start our campaign on.

Lastly the vast majority (98%) of our participants were of the Islamic faith. Thus the results cannot be generalised to people of other faiths, however as the aim of Nour is to abolish DV using Islam as our greatest tool, we felt this difference in religious background did not affect the results obtained negatively.

### **Conclusion**

The study has found very interesting and shocking data which shows the necessity of Nour's existence. We have found there to be misconceptions held of Islam by those who follow the religion, which indicates that the re-education of the religion to eradicate these beliefs is vital. Further, 56% of our participants had witnessed DV first hand, displaying how prevalent DV is within the community. The study has allowed us to focus on points we feel need to be initially tackled such as cultural and family influences, misconceptions and bringing about awareness of the existence of Nour in order to help the victims.