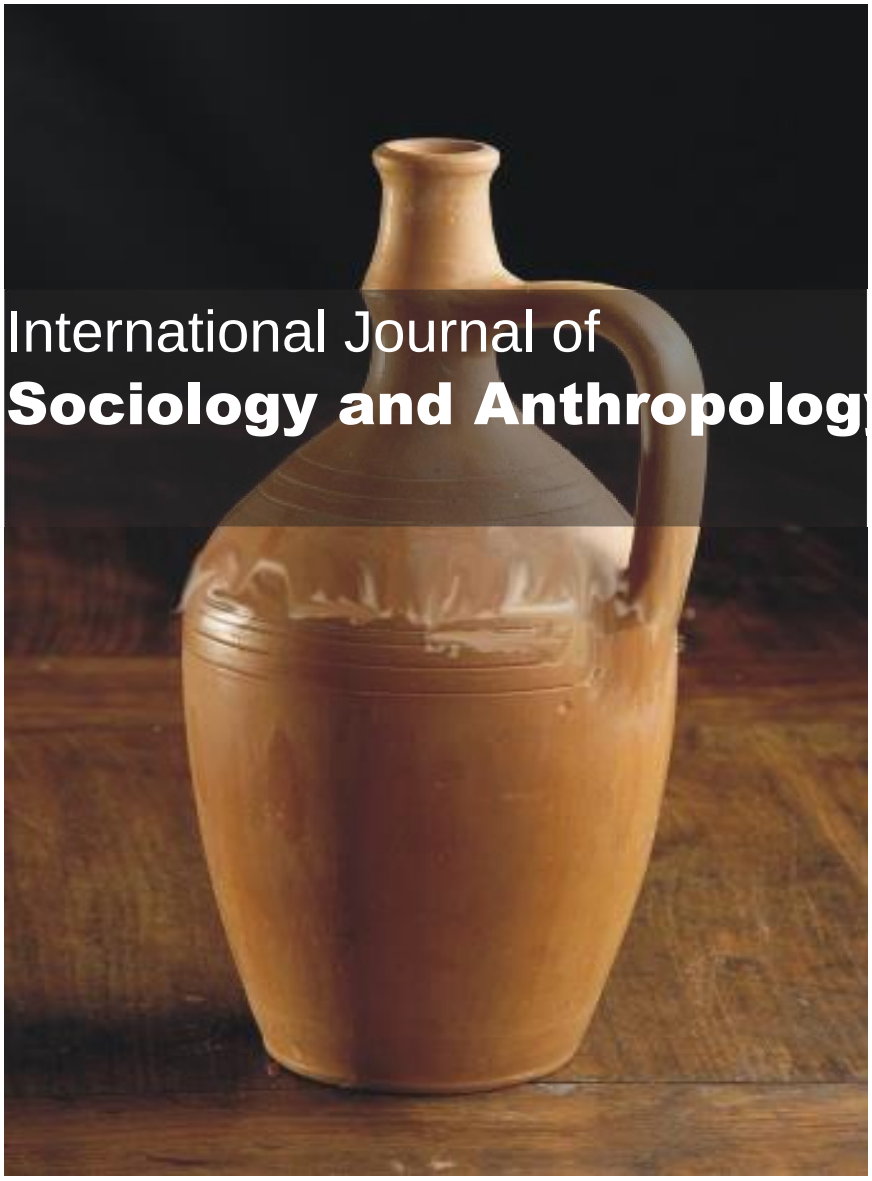
OPEN ACCESS



International Journal of Sociology and Anthropolog

June 2019
ISSN: 2006-988X
DOI: D10.5897/IJSA
www.academicjournals.org

ACADEMIC JOURNALS
expand your knowledge

ABOUT IJSA

The **International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (IJSA)** is published monthly (one volume per year) by Academic Journals.

International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (IJSA) is an open access journal that provides rapid Publication (monthly) of articles in all areas of the subject such as Socialization, post colonialism, kinship and Descent, Culture, ethnography etc. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Papers will be published shortly after acceptance. All articles published in IJSA are peer-reviewed.

Contact Us

Editorial Office: ijsa@academicjournals.org

Help Desk: helpdesk@academicjournals.org

Website: http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/IJSA

Submit manuscript online http://ms.academicjournals.me/

Editors

Prof. Roland Armando Alum
Senior International Research consultant,
ICOD Associates of New Jersey,
Trustee: DeVry University (New Jersey Campuses),
USA.

Dr. Roseline M. Achieng
Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535
South Africa.

Dr. Fidelma Ashe
School of Policy Studies
University of Ulster
Newtownabbey
BT37 0QB
Northern Ireland

Prof. Silvia Ciotti
Department of Environmental Science,
St. John International University
Italy.

Dr. C. I. David Joy
United Theological college,
Benson Town P.O.
Bangalore-46
India.

Dr. Kewal Krishan
Department of Anthropology
Panjab University
Chandigarh-160 014
India.

Prof. Isabella Crespi
Ph.D Sociology and Research Methodology
Professor of Cultural Sociology
Department of Education
University of Macerata
Italy.

Prof. M. Isabel Garrido Gómez
Professor of Legal Philosophy
Faculty of Law
University of Alcalá
Spain

Dr. Amani Hamdan
Ottawa University
1440 Heron Road APT 710
Ottawa, ON
K1V 0X2
Canada

Dr. Brian Milne
106 Glen Road, West Cross, Swansea SA3 5QJ, Wales,
UK.

Dr. Stephen Vertigans
Applied Social Studies,
Faculty of Social Science
Robert Gordon University,
Aberdeen,
UK

Dr. Md. Emaj Uddin
Department of Social Work,
University of Rajshahi,
Rajshahi-6205,
Bangladesh.

Dr. John Horace Enemugwem
Department of History & Diplomatic Studies,
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt,
Rivers State,
Nigeria.

Prof. Eleonora Kormysheva
Director of the Golenishev Egyptological Center,
Russian State University for Humanities Moscow,
157265
Miusskaya square 6
Department of the History of Orient,
The Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
Moscow 103031
Russia

Editorial Board

Dr. Hyun-Chin Lim
President, Korean Association of Political Sociology
Dean, College of Social Sciences
Seoul National University
Seoul 151-742,
Korea

Dr. Nels Paulson
Assistant Professor of Sociology
University of Wisconsin-Stout
332E Harvey Hall
Menomonie, WI 54751
USA.

Dr. Samuel Law
MD FRCP(C)
Assistant Professor,
Department of Psychiatry,
University of Toronto.

Dr. B. B. Mohanty
Professor and Head
Department of Sociology
Pondicherry University
Pondicherry 605 014,
India.

Dr. Rashid Solagberu Adisa
Agricultural and Rural Development Specialist
Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
University of Ilorin,
Ilorin, Kwara State,
Nigeria.

Dr. Joy Asongazoh Alemazung
Lecturer and International Student Officer
Hochschule Bremen (University of Applied Sciences)
School of International Business (SIB)
Werderstrasse
Bremen,
Germany.

Dr. Julia Maria Wittmayer
Scientific Researcher & Consultant
DRIFT (Dutch Research Institute for Transitions),
Erasmus University Rotterdam,
The Netherlands.

Dr. Rukhsana Gazi
Associate Scientist & Head,
Health Systems and Economics Unit,
Health Systems and Infectious Diseases Division,
ICDDR, B
Mohakhali C/A
Dhaka 1212
Bangladesh.

Dr. C P S Chauhan
Professor of Education & Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh
India.

Dr. Sunita Bose
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
SUNY, New Paltz
New Paltz, NY 12561.

Dr. Matthew M. Chew
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
Hong Kong Baptist University
Kowloon Tong, Kowloon
HKSAR,
China.

Dr. Eswarappa Kasi, Ph.D
Guest Faculty,
Department of Anthropology,
University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad- 500 046,
Andhra Pradesh,
India.

Dr. Hoon Chang Yau
Assistant Professor of Asian Studies
School of Social Sciences
Singapore Management University
Singapore.

Dr. Stephen J. Hunt
Department of Sociology and Criminology,
Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences,
University of the West of England,
Bristol,
UK.

Table of Content

Lived experiences of young Emirati women in the combined family: Extending and rethinking sociological concepts **27**
Mohammed Abdel Karim Al Hourani

Vol.11(3), pp. 27-36, June 2019
DOI: 10.5897/IJSA2019.0807
Article Number: 796D03D61297
ISSN 2006- 988x
Copyright © 2019
Author(s) retain the copyright of this article
http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA

ACADEMIC JOURNALS
expand your knowledge

International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology

Full Length Research

Lived experiences of young Emirati women in the combined family: Extending and rethinking sociological concepts

Mohammed Abdel Karim Al Hourani

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Received 6 May, 2019; Accepted 21 June, 2019

Using evidence from 72 young Emirati women experiences who have participated in a series of eleven focus groups, this study rethinks and extends traditional sociological concepts and classifications. This research propose the concept of combined family to show a unique pattern of family relationships and economic participation that exists in some areas of UAE that combines the wealthiest and modernized appearances with the oldest traditions. The results show social determinism versus economic determinism since participants' families have independent access to the economic assets, but they prefer to be around parents and brothers. The concept of circumstantial expectations is proposed to extend the notion of social exchange theory that family members are engaging in exchanges with no future or immediate expectations of returns. Because the concept of bonding social capital did not give a full understanding of the social dynamics in the sociocultural context of UAE, it is extended to include two sub-concepts; exclusive social capital and internal-kin social capital.

Key words: Women experiences, Emirati women, Emirate family, family forms.

INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, UAE society has witnessed profound changes in its cultural and social systems which enabled Emirati women to be more educated and participant in the workplace and the public sphere. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that women are experiencing an unrivalled golden age, at least in terms of acquiring the human rights that guarantee their dignity (Al Oraimi, 2013). On the other hand, social research about UAE has consecrated the false perception that all Emirates witnessed rapid changes and moved toward modernization. Relatively, this is true, but there are a deep differentiations between Emirates and the sub-areas in each Emirate, for example, in the central region of Sharjah Emirate which is the population of this study, these changes didn't give women their full freedom and independency in many

E-mail: mhouranis@yahoo.co.uk.

This research was supported by the University of Sharjah, (statement No. 1803020413-p).

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

aspects of their lives, including choice of marriage, higher education, involving in workplace, careers and family life (Foster et al., 2014). In fact, this area of UAE society and many areas across all Emirates are still traditional, conservative and patriarchal in its family relationships despite the wide material changes and welfare. Hence, the social situation of women is still abided by the Bedouin manners by which family arrange its relationships, roles, statuses and its structure of power.

Contrary to some researchers who indicated that Emirate family has moved from traditional tribal-type patterns (enmeshed systems), to nuclear family structures (disengaged systems) (Al Najjar and Samadi, 1998; Smadi and Al Simadi, 1994), the researcher has observed that the most prevailing pattern of Emirate family is what he calls the *combined family* where all sons live around their father's house which is surrounded by a wall. This combined family imposes mutual surveillance, constraints, and limitations and restricts freedom and independency of the young Emirati women. But the shocking truth is that most of Emirate young women are satisfied with this pattern of living, respect it and prefers it to the single separated accommodation. The researcher has picked up this notion from his young women students in the central region of Sharjah Emirate during a conversation about patterns of marriage in UAE and then from my casual observation. The researcher concluded that this social context would be unusual and fruitful for extending the sociological concepts. After that occasion, he proposed research questions as follow: Why do these young women prefer to live in the combined family? What are the benefits they obtain from this pattern of living? And what are the challenges they face in their daily life?

The structure of combined family: Legitimized restrictions on women

Despite the rapid and profound changes of the material infrastructures, the superstructure in UAE didn't witness parallel changes, including the authoritative family structure and the relationships among family members. This means that the traditions of Emirati society are still dominating the family structure and relationships. That is to say, the Emirate family, traditionally, was extended family in which several generations can be found under one roof. Such family served as a productive-social unit which reflected functional necessity reproduced by the traditional mode of production where the harsh existential conditions of living demanded high levels of solidarity, cooperation and joint action.

Emirate extended family pattern was patriarchal and patrilineal based on age and sex, that is, the authority and decision making in all aspects of family life were vested by males (father, husband and old sons) and women were obliged to subject and obey the orders. Besides, women were less valued compared to males (Crabtree, 2007), this family pattern is still reproduced but in an advanced and modernized life.

In this article, I argue that this pattern of family didn't move to the nuclear pattern of family as many researchers pointed out. In the last four decades, Emirate family has been moved to a unique pattern which can be described as combined family. This pattern of family represents an aggregation of small families of brothers who are surrounding their parents' house and sharing all demands and conditions of living. Despite that, each one has the ability to be separated entirely. In detail, the combined family is characterized by the following: 1) There is a central family house which is the house of the parents, but it is the center and frame of reference of everything relating to the family such as money support, solving disputes, managing relationships, decision making and choice of marriage, etc. 2) This central family is surrounded by small families of sons. 3) Each small family has its small house that consists of two or three rooms at maximum and small kitchen and bathroom. 4) Each small family has its independent income that comes from the work of husband and sometimes the work of the wife. 5) There is a shared kitchen for all members of the combined family; the kitchen is managed by chief and servants for all families' members. 6) The complex of houses surrounded by a high wall with main gate. 7) As a tradition of the combined family, all members gather on Friday in the parents' house and they are take lunch together. But this doesn't mean that they meet only one time in the week.

Obviously, the combined family is not nuclear since it doesn't consist of scattered individuals as the isolated nuclear family, and at the same time, it has much difference from extended family. Firstly, while extended family members have the same traditional work (such as: fishing, pearl-diving, herding and farming), the members of combined family are, economically independent and everyone has his specialization, but they are ready to, and actually do share all what they have with their brothers and parents, this means that the family has moved from interdependency (extended) to participation (combined). Secondly, combined family exists in the welfare era of UAE, so it reflects a voluntaristic participatory unit, while extended family emerged on the basis of the demands of necessity to overcome the hard conditions of living. In other words, members of extended family were obliged to unify with the family given the harsh material conditions and the requirements of the mode of production. But the members of the combined family are living in luxury and leisure, but the traditions still impact them together. Thirdly, due to modernization and luxury life, the functions of the extended family such as child rearing and socialization, education and employment disappeared, so, maids and babysitters are employed by most families regardless of whether mothers are employed outside the home, and most sons go to schools and universities and work in governmental

occupations.

It is necessary to say that the traditions of UAE have extended over time. This means that the patriarchal structure of the family still exists even after the discovery of oil. In fact, over the last two decades, the UAE has witnessed what can be described as a quiet revolution in the legal rights and economic power of Emirati women (Al Marzouqi and Forster, 2011). In addition, numerous government-funded women's organizations and associations have been created to promote the economic and social interests of Emirati women, under the umbrella of the UAE Women Federation (UAEWF), established in 1975. In 2005, the UAE Government became a signatory to the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the United Nation's convention on women's rights. (Al Marzouqi and Forster, 2011). As a result of these initiatives and legislative changes, Emirati women have been empowered by education and working in professions; however, it is necessary to say that the traditions of UAE society have been reproduced over time by the combined family, regardless the changing infrastructures and the moods of production. This means that the patriarchal structure of the family and its culture still exists and these changes didn't lead to get her independence and emancipation.

Many studies reported that families in the UAE conform to a patriarchal patrilineal model, in which the prerogative of the father, husband and older sons is benevolently viewed as that of guardianship over women. This, more scathingly, has been described by western authors as a form of authoritarianism and dictatorship in which the wife is often relegated to the role of servant and submissive creature (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Schvaneveldt et al., 2005).

Theoretical framework: Social exchange and social capital

Theoretically, this study conceptualizes social exchanges and social capital as motivations for the young Emirati women to live in the combined family. Family ties have been and continue to be crucial for well-being of family members in UAE, while sons take advantage from living around their parents, conversely, as an obligation stemmed from Islamic values; they are being obedient and take care of them. This is a generalized and legitimized reciprocity in UAE society and accepted from males and females, for this reason, it would be prohibited and shameful for sons to abandon their parents.

When considering exchanges between combined family members, it is important to revisit Homans' distinction between tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources that might be transferred between combined family members include money, child care services, or time spent engaged with children in cultural and educational pursuits. Intangible resources such as love, emotional attachment, and the creation of social capital (or the resources that individuals can draw upon in social networks) can also be prime motivators for family based behaviors (Astone et al., 1999), including the transfer of tangible resources. Combined family members might not expect to receive tangible resources immediately in return for what they contribute to.

However, they certainly might expect to receive intangible resources, such as increased access to seeing the youngest members of the family, stronger relationships with family members, and the expectation that if they were to need help in the future, they might see such resources returned to them (Eliott, 2008).

Social exchange theory addresses four main motivations for Emirati women to live within combined families and exchange resources within them. 1) Rational choice; this notion assumes that actor is purposive and has the capacity to act on the base of his/her preferences to maximize his benefits (Cook, 2000; Coleman, 1988, Coleman, 1993; Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997). This notion is seemingly oppositional to the practices of altruism among family members; besides, they are engaging in exchanges with no future or immediate expectations of returns (Emerson, 1976). 2) Reciprocity and the expectation of future returns: This notion refers to the expectations that develop in the social exchange relationship and obliges takers to be givers (Bearman, 1997).

The norm of reciprocity generates more and more exchange and sustain the relationship since it construct trust and commitment among partners, and so, particularly, it is strong among networks of kin. 3) The desire to invest in family social capital: According to Woolcock and Narayan, (2000), the basic idea of social capital is that an individual's family, friends and social networks constitute an important asset, one that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for material gains. In kin networks, reciprocity helps to build social capital within families and represents investments for family members. The notion of social capital refers to families as exchange networks that provide its members with resources which may access as needed (Furstenberg and Frank, 2005). 4) The emotional ties: The positive emotional attachments individuals have to their family networks may be an important motivating factor to participate in exchange relationships with family members over others (Eliott, 2008). Emotions result from interactions and exchanges, and then reinforce future commitments with exchange networks (Cook and Rice, 2003).

For Emirati women, socialization and traditions create a kind of generalized reciprocity norm within family members in UAE that play an important role in consecrating the feeling of collective responsibility and obligation to the combined family to engage in social exchanges and reproduce social capital. Therefore, resources from combined family are often intangible and tangible with little expectations of short-time returns.

Emirati women: Continuity and change in the social position

The research literature on Emirati women is very limited. Crabtree (2007) studied the influence of change on gender norms and roles within UAE family. She found that despite social progress in so many areas of daily life, gender normative behavior continues to conform closely to the prescribed roles for men and women associated to religion and culture. Thus, the proper domain of women is seen as being quintessentially in the home environment regardless of the political call to education and employment. We do know that the UAE currently ranked first for gender equality in the MENA, was ranked 29th in the UN's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) in 2009 and ranked 43rd among 177 countries in the United Nations' Gender-Related Development Index (Foster et al., 2014). Research findings revealed that some Emirate fathers do not allow their daughters to pursue certain careers, and others still do not permit them to work in mixed-gender work places (Marmenout, 2009). Consistently with this result, Erogul and McCrohan (2007) revealed that although much has changed in Emirate society over the last two decades, it is still characterized by a patriarchal culture, and fathers still exert considerable control over their daughters' lives and continue to make many of the important decisions that affect their education, careers, and choice of marriage partners. Furthermore, for many Emirate men, the growing economic power and new-found independence of Emirati women can create problems. If a wife decides that she wants to pursue a career, some local men still feel that this is a challenge to their role as the principal family breadwinner (Al Marzouqi and Forster, 2011). With only the occasional objection, society has accepted women going out to be educated and to work. But despite educational and job-related achievements, women still play traditional roles in a complementary manner, and social values rooted in patriarchal/tribal values still survive (Al Oraimi, 2013). For women in the UAE, despite some progress in access to education, health, and the economic sector, their rights continue to be widely violated. Legislation remains deeply discriminatory, particularly in the area of the family, and deep-rooted stereotypes of women's roles in society persist. Migrant women are particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights, both as non-nationals and as women (International Federation for Human Rights, 2010).

Women are subjected to gender-based discrimination regarding their right to own and use housing. Traditionally, Emirati women live either with their husband or, if unmarried, their parents, and there is a powerful social stigma associated with women living away from their families (Kirdar, 2010). In the last decade Emirati women crossed the traditional gender boundaries where men were completely dominate. For example, as a report of the Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs (2008) pointed out, women become members of the cabinet, the federal national council, judges, ambassadors, and in the military. Furthermore, women involved in the diplomatic service and higher posts of government amount to 30 percent of the UAE's civil service including diplomatic postings abroad, and a total of 66 percent of the government sector is represented by women. Despite that, all these changes didn't affect the patriarchal culture of the family and gender discrimination.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were local young women who are living in the central region of al Sharjah Emirate which is classified as a Bedouin region. The sample (N=72) included the three local communities of the central region (Al Dhaid=30, Maleha=22 and Al Madam=20). A purposive sampling method was used to identify potential participants. The researcher identified and contacted key informants who were local female students in Al Dhaid university (a branch of the University of Sharjah in UAE).The key informants assisted the researcher in the recruitment of participants from the three local communities and in planning focus groups. The focus groups took place at the University of Al-Dhaid. This location was comfortable and safe for the young women to discuss their experiences openly and honestly since some of them (25) were students at University.

Procedure

Focus groups didn't incorporate participants from each local community separately because the participants are generally from the homogeneous region (Keown, 1983). This study involved a series of eleven focus groups; the smallest group had 5 participants while the largest had 10, with an average size of approximately 7 people per group. Before starting the discussion, the group leaders read a prepared statement outlining the purpose of the focus group and potential risks and benefits.

The focus groups were facilitated by two female research assistants who had master degrees in sociology and were trained by the author of this article. The focus groups employed a semi-structured interview so that the content of the interview was covered in a conversational manner that invited open responses from the participants. This study analyzed responses to the following questions: (a) Do you feel more secure in the combined family for you and your small family? (b) What aspects of economic support and facilities do you achieve from living in the combined family such as expenses of the house, children, food etc.? (c) Do you feel free and independent regarding going outside, visiting friends, visiting your family etc.? (d) How do you describe your relationships with your family of origin, friends, and your husband's family? (e) How do you regard living in the combined family beneficial for domestic work and socialization of children such as cooking, cleaning, washing, teaching children, preparing children for school etc.? The author of this article derived these questions after a deep conversation with seven local young women students who were studying in al Sharjah university-Al Dhaid.

Data analysis

All focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed. Each focus group lasted from 90 to 120 min. The tow research assistants independently read through each transcript multiple times and

coded the data. The author met the assistants several times to develop the analytical process and review the coding together in stages. Using grounded theory methodology (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), analysis was conducted applying a method of constant comparative analysis to generate codes and identify patterns (Glaser, 2002). Data analysis began through the use of open coding so that the data were assigned codes to capture the essential ideas found in the transcribed text. Next, axial coding was used to group the codes into categories. After formulating the final identified themes, codes were subsequently entered into ATLAS.ti Version 6.2 (2011) and then applied to the transcripts for each focus group. After that, the printouts of the transcripts were reviewed by the author and assistants to ensure the accuracy of analysis compared with the voices of the participants.

RESULTS

Existential security

This theme includes participant's perceptions about secured living they obtain from being among the combined family members (Table 1). Specific feelings and behaviors addressed by participants included feeling of contentment, safety, solidity, conformability, less worries and anxiety. They get help for anything they need, for example, consultation, advice, medication, taking care of children. As one participant reported:

I always feel secure for me and my children, it is so comfortable for me to find someone whom I trust and talk to me every day, taking care of me whenever I feel tired, helping me whenever I want help. For example, if my child feels sick, I immediately find someone who helps; actually, I don't imagine how my life would be if I lived in a separate house, fear, isolation and anxiety.

Moreover, elderly people (parents of husbands) are playing an important role in achieving existential security for the young women in the combined family. As participants suggested, they have wide and deep experiences and they know how to solve the problems of everyday life. They provide all family members with consultation, advice and treatment based on folkways. As one participant expressed:

I feel safe in the presence of my husband's parents; they are our frame of reference in life.

Islamic values appeared in participants' responses, for example, they repeatedly used the Islamic term *Al Ber* which means that son should be subject and obedient to his parents as well as taking care of them. This, in the Islamic conception, will grant sons, God's blessing and mercy. Participants addressed another Islamic term repeatedly regarding living with elderly people; this term is *Al Barakah* which means that obedience to parents would grant sons a growing happiness, wealth, children and health. From this perspective, participants regarded living with husband parents as a source of bringing God's mercy upon them.

Economic support and facilities

Participants reported that the combined family secures comprehensive economic guarantees for them and their children that include; cash money, house expenses, children expenses, food expenses, medication and treatment costs, traveling costs and schooling expenses. As one participant said:

My existence in the combined family reduces our expenses, for example, many times my father in law pays for kitchen purchases. Last year when my husband was in want of money to travel for treatment, he obtained money from his brother; times ago his father took my children to the hospital and paid the costs.

Besides, participants addressed the facilities they obtain from their living in the combined family such as; cars, domestic servants, cooking and cleaning. As one participant said:

Recent living with my large family reduces responsibilities and facilitates my life. I cannot cook for my husband and children, every day I find my family food ready. If I don't want to drive, I find someone who would drive me. If I have problem in my car, I can find many cars, even if my husband is outside the country, I don't worry about anything.

Participants compared their living in the combined family with the living in the single house in order to justify their consensus on the advantages of their recent living. As one participant justified:

If I am in a single house, I will be in want of servants for cooking and servants for cleaning and this will generate pressure on our budget, then I will depend on myself for everything which aggravates my responsibilities and reduces my comfort.

It is important to note that the father of the combined family is not only a source of *Al Barakah* and doesn't derive the legitimacy of *Al Ber* from the Islamic values only, but also from being a source of economic support. Namely, there is a conjunction between social and religious values and the economic support which motivate young women to live in the combined family.

Freedom and independency

Participants reported constraints of freedom and independency; however, they didn't complain or denounce their condition. They presented these constraints as a part of their traditions and style of life. These constraints

Table 1. Characteristics.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-22	20	28
	23-27	38	53
	28-32	14	19
	Total	72	100
Educational attainment	Basic	7	10
	B. S. degree	65	90
	Total	72	100
Husband's educational attainment	Secondary	6	8
	Diploma	21	29
	B.S. degree	45	63
	Total	72	100
Are you currently working?	Yes	26	36
	No	46	54
	Total	72	100
Number of children	1-2	42	58
	3-4	22	31
	5-	8	11
	Total	72	100
Income	Less than 30 thousands AED	18	25
	30-50	48	67
	More than 50	6	8
	Total	72	100
Is your husband from your relatives	Yes	56	78
	No	16	22
	Total	72	100
Do you prefer to live in a separate house?	Yes	13	18
	No	59	82
	Total	72	100

include restrictions on; going outside alone, visiting family of origin and friends, subjection to question and surveillance, and being under control all the time. As one participant said:

You know we are in a conservative and religious community. If I want to visit my mother they (she means father and mother in law) ask me when you will come back. My mother barely visits me (one time in the year) because my husband's brothers are around.

Another participant explained:

I would like to be free from surveillance; sometimes, I note their anger in their eyes while I am going outside. Usually they ask; where are you going? It is shameful to ignore them; I have to obey them always.

It is important to know that females in this community are over socialized to be obedient especially to their husbands and elderly people in general, including father/father in law and mother/mother in law. Therefore, they don't reject or argue and they have to accept the status quo.

In the combined family, a young woman is constrained by moral and religious behaviors. For example, she cannot speak loudly with her children or with the servants even if she is nervous; as well as, she cannot remove the

veil (Islamic cover of head). Besides, she cannot invite her friends to her house, therefore, she invite them to her family house. As one participant reported:

One day I shouted at the servant and my mother in law heard me, then she rebuked me and told my husband.

Social relationships

This theme includes relationships with husband's parents, family of origin and friends. Participants reported shrinkage in the social relationships with the social world outside the combined family including friends and family of origin. As a part of social traditions, when a female gets married, she consecrates her efforts and time to her small family and husband's parents. For example, participants described mothers in law as their mothers and so for the fathers in law. For participants, parents in law play an important role in solving disputes with their husbands, as well as, they take care of children. Besides, participants regarded parents in law as a frame of reference for consultation and advice. As one participant said:

My father in law is my father and so the mother in law. I am obedient to them, and they regard me as if I am their daughter. They solve our disputes constantly and provide me with advice when I need it and many more.

At the same time, parents in law play a constraining role for participants. This role includes blaming, criticism, investigation and intervening. For example, one participant explained:

Sometimes, I hesitate to visit my parents since they are watching me (to avoid their investigation), they don't prevent me, but they are just imposing their will. You know this kind of control determine my relations with others including my parents and friends".

The majority of participants reported that their parents and friends are living around in the same local community. Despite that, they are meeting together in occasions. Having a wide social networks means that woman doesn't conform to the traditions and morals of the combined family. Participants said that they have a limited number of friends who are usually trustful for husband and his parents as well as the families of friends should be trustful for husband family. It is important to say that most participants have friends from their relatives, that is, not because they descent from a tribal community but also because their relatives are more accepted and legitimized by their combined families. As one participant mentioned:

All of my friends are among my kin and some of them are my cousins. It is very important for our families to know the background of your friends; at least you will avoid many questions and doubts.

This result is consistent with the social context of the participant's community. There are two mechanisms reproducing the social system and the social order; internal marriage and kinship relationships.

Domestic work and socialization of children

Participants reported that most of domestic work such as; cleaning, washing and cooking is done, most often by the domestic servants who are shared by all single houses of the combined family. As participants reported, the process of distributing domestic servants is done in an arbitrary way day by day. It depends on who is calling the servant first, but no conflicts occurring since servants are available all the time and they can do the entire domestic work. As one participant said:

I am not skilled regarding domestic work, servants do everything for me, even the children's shower, but sometimes, I do simple things like washing a cup, cleaning some spots on the floor, frying eggs and preparing sandwich.

All single houses in the combined family share one kitchen and all members eat the same main course every day. Each family eats separately except on Friday, they should eat together in the parents' house (the family house). Participants regard this as an advantage for them comparing with the single house, since one servant cannot do all what they need as well as the servant may flee, then they have to depend on themselves. And if they want more than one servant, they will be overburdened by expenses. As one participant expressed:

You know that we have drivers, chefs, and many domestic servants, so why do I need to use my hands or exhaust myself? Actually, I don't care for all forms of domestic work, even if I have a feast.

For socialization of children participants reported that they are feeling reassured for their children and sometimes they find someone who helps in teaching them or doing home works. Furthermore, participants reported that their children learn and acquire prayers, habits and tradition from their uncles and grandfather more effectively, as well as, they play with their uncles' sons and learn by extensive interaction to speak fluently. As one participant explained:

I always feel reassured for my children even if I go outside since I know there are many people form the family existing continuously. Sometimes, I ask someone to teach my children a particular lesson in math or English.

Another participant explained:

I am very happy that my children learn prayers and our tradition from their uncles and grandfather, they take them to the mosque and children imitating their acts. You know that children encourage each other while they are eating, playing and speaking; this interaction with peers develops in them a strong personality.

At the same time, participants reported some acts and interventions that cause their children to underestimate them. Participants used a number of terms to describe these acts such as; teasing me, suppress me and devaluate me. Participants regarded these acts as negative outcomes for socializing children. As one participant said:

Sometimes, I ask my child to do something, but mother in law or father in law asks him not to do, or when I punish my child by depriving him from something he wants, they rebuke me in front of him and oblige me to give him what he wants or they give him what he wants. I think this intervention encourage my child to underestimate me. It could cause one to lose control over the child; actually, these things teasing me, make me cry.

Another participant reported:

My son, sometimes, threatens me of telling his grandfather or grandmother if I don't give him what he wants; they suppress me when they respond to him.

DISCUSSION

This study has pushed forward the boundaries of some sociological concepts in order to achieve a realistic understanding of the conditions of Emirati women. This study has also addressed the concept of combined family to separate its conception from the extended family and nuclear family. Furthermore, the data of this study reevaluates the concept of economic determinism. Although family members have independent access to economic assets, they are obedient to their parents and tend to live around them. In this case, the power of traditions enforced by reciprocity through social capital network has more influence on the nature of social relationships than economic determinism; this is what the researcher tends to label as social determinism.

This study revealed that young Emirati women have achieved several benefits from their living in the combined family (Furstenberg and Frank, 2005). In fact, combined family is a dual structure for young women since it enables and constrains them; but, because they are over socialized to accept their living, they maximized the benefits and reduced disadvantages. At the community of the central region of Sharjah Emirate, all families reproduce their cohesion and solidarity by raising and socializing members on the pattern of shared living. Therefore, young Emirati women accept this living on the base of a generalized reciprocity.

Combined family represents a bonding social capital (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Eliott, 2008) that secures many benefits for young Emirati women such as; existential security that includes feelings of contentment, safety, conformability, less anxiety, advice, consultation, medication, power and solidarity. It is important to explain that this advantage of the shared living was imposed many decades ago, relatively, by the arid and scary desert as a material realty with the long geographical distances between population aggregations. Although the desert has less impact nowadays under modernization and the modern channels of communications, people still have a strong belief in shared living.

Participants were not purposive and have not the capacity to act to maximize their benefits when they engaged with the combined family (Cook, 2000; Coleman, 1988). Data showed that they have expectations about what they probably take when they are in need such as cash money, expenses of children, food and education. This notion seemingly direct attention to rethinking the notion (Emerson, 1976) that family members are engaging in exchanges with no future or immediate expectations of returns. These are not future or immediate expectations, but what the researcher calls circumstantial expectations that arise under certain circumstances of indigence. This type of expectations grant participants generalized feelings of security and incentives of integration since they expect help form family members regardless the nature of the emergent circumstances.

As participants mentioned that living in the combined family determines their relationships to outsiders and, at the same time, deepens their relationships inside the family, it is very important to explain that the community of participants is based on kinship. This means that the majority of relationships are built with relatives. To consider this result with the nature of community, the researcher distinguishes two types of bonding social capital: First, exclusive social capital inside the combined family; second, internal-kin social capital inside the community. From this perspective, participants experience shrinkage in the internal-kin social capital to the benefit of the exclusive social capital. However, on the macro structure level, there is integration between the two types of social capital, whereas the exclusive social capital comes out of the internal-kin social capital permanently.

Participants have low levels of freedom and independence since they are under the control and surveillance of family members all the time. However, they didn't complain because they became by socialization, accustomed and routinized to their living. All mechanisms of female subordination work together implicitly to consecrate the authority of males; for this

reason, women in this community have false consciousness about their rights and status which were not affected by their education. Neither luxury life nor education could push the status of women forward to be equal to men's status or to be free and independent (Al Oraimi, 2013).

This case shows how strong reinforcement of social order including Islamic beliefs and survivals make young women legitimize and justify their conditions of living. Hence, they didn't regard interventions in children socialization which underestimated them as a big problem. These interventions only tease them and they overcome the situation by crying since they cannot cross their mothers or fathers in law. Islamic beliefs play an important role in consecrating participants' obedience for husband and his parents. They internalized the Islamic values that regard obedience to husband and parents as worship and make the violation of these values more harmful for the reputation of the young woman and her family of origin (Kirdar, 2010).

Findings indicated that young Emirati women are depending completely on domestic servants, chefs, and drivers. In fact, they are living in economic opulence. However, this conspicuous leisure is extracted from its values such as; openness, freedom, equality and independence. Consumerism is the mechanism by which they compensate the lost freedom and dignity, so that they consume goods, clothes, jewelry and cars, even education and work became matters of consumption for them so they don't peruse education as a value in itself.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Participants in this study were a convenient sample of 72 local young women in the central region of Sharjah Emirate in UAE country, where the most prevailing pattern of family is combined family. The findings of this study cannot be generalized beyond this sample. Future research should be conducted in other regions and Emirates to determine if similar experiences flow in other social contexts, specially the urban regions. It must also be noted that the questions of this study focused on the benefits and advantages that young Emirati women earn from living in the combined family in order to explain why they are attracted to this pattern of living and don't think about single or separated houses. For this reason, the questions didn't concentrate on the disadvantages of living in a combined family for young women. Questions that focus on disadvantages and specific forms of constraints should be part of future interview protocols.

Findings from this study point to the need for the implementation of strategies designed to increase the ability of woman to manage their relationships within the combined family and to be more conscious, independent and productive. This may be particularly crucial in the central region where women have little choice to design their lives and do not grant their small families enough efforts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

Al Marzouqi A, Forster N (2011). An exploratory study of the under-representation of Emirati women in the United Arab Emirates' information technology sector. Equality Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal 30(7):544-562.

Al Najjar A, Smadi A (1998). Delinquents and Non delinquents Perceptions of Family Functioning in the United Arab Emirates. Social Behavior and Personality 26(4):375-382.

Al Oraimi S (2013). The Concept of Gender in Emirati Culture: An Analytical Study of the Role of the State in Redefining Gender and Social Roles https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/muse.12009

Al-Khateeb SAH (1998). Muslim women's perceptions of equality: Case study of Saudi Women. Mediterranean Quarterly 9(2):110-131

Astone N, Constance A, Robert S, Young J (1999). "Family Demography, Social Theory, and Investment in Social Capital." Population and Development Review 25:1-31.

ATLAS/ti (Version 6.2) [Computer software] (2011). Berlin: Scientific Software Development. https://atlas-ti.software.informer.com/6.2/

Bearman P (1997). Generalized Exchange. The American Journal of Sociology 102:1383-1415.

Coleman J (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. The American Journal of Sociology 94:S95-S120.

Coleman J (1993). The Rational Reconstruction of Society: 1992 Presidential Address. American Sociological Review 58:1-15.

Cook K (2000). "Advances in the Microfoundations of Sociology: Recent Developments and New Challenges for Social Psychology. Contemporary Sociology 29:685-692.

Cook K, Eric R (2003). "Social Exchange Theory." pp. 53-76 in Handbook of Social Psychology, edited by J. Delamater. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Corbin J, Strauss A (2008). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Crabtree S (2007). Culture, Gender and the Influence of Social Change amongst Emirate Families in the United Arab Emirates. Journal of Comparative Family Studies 38(4):576-587.

Eliott D (2008). How Nuclear Is The Nuclear Family? Extended Family Investments in Children, ProQuest LLC, UMI No. 3339453.

Emerson R (1976). Social Exchange Theory. Annual Review of Sociology 2:335-362.

Erogul M, McCrohan D (2007). "Do socio-cultural factors affect female entrepreneurship in the UAE?" Proceedings of the Cultures and Context Conference, Aberdeen, UK, September, pp. 13-15.

Foster N, Ebrahim A, Ibrahim N (2014). An Exploratory Study of Work-Life Balance and Work Family Conflicts in the United Arab Emirates, Skyline Business Journal 9(1):34-42.

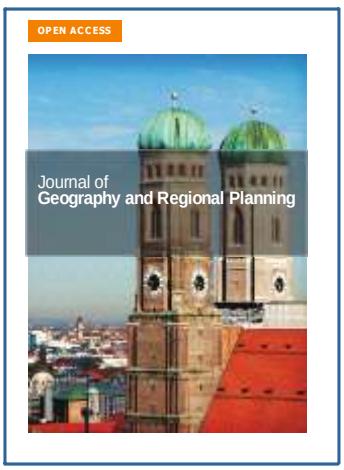
Furstenberg Jr., Frank F (2005). Banking on Families: How Families Generate and Distribute Social Capital. Journal of Marriage and Family 67:809-821.

Glaser B (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. International Journal of Qualitative Methods 1(2):3.

Hechter M, Kanazawa S (1997). Sociological Rational Choice Theory, Annual Review of Sociology 23:191-214.

International Federation for Human Rights (2010). Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Note submitted to the 45th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the occasion of its first examination of the UAE.

Keown C (1983). Focus group research: Tool for the retailer. Journal of

Small Business Management 21(2):9-56.
Kirdar S (2010). United Arab Emirates, in Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress amid Resistance, ed. Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin (New York, NY: Freedom House; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefi eld, 2010).
Marmenout M (2009). Breaking gender stereotypes in the Middle East', Research on Women-Focused Leadership Development in the Middle East. Available at: http:// knowledge.insead.edu/women-gender-stereotypes.cfm (accessed 15 April 2010).
Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs (2008). Women in the United Arab Emirates: A Portrait of Progress.
Schvaneveldt PL, Kerpelman JL, Schvaneveldt J (2005). Generational and cultural changes in family life in the United Arab Emirates: A comparison of mothers and daughters. Journal of Comparative Family Studies 36(1):77-91.
Smadi A, Al Simadi F (1994). The impact of social development on Jordanian's family. Family Perspective 28:107-112.
Woolcock M, Narayan D (2000). Social capital: Implications for development theory, research, and policy. The World Bank Research Observer 15:225-249.

Related Journals: