

# Contemporary Women in Qatar: An Ethnographic Study of Their Challenges in Terms of Traditional Applications and Modern Requirements

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the interaction and friction between tradition and modernity as experienced by Qatari women. We explore the experiences and perspectives of contemporary Qatari women across generations and their continuity and friction with the historical sociocultural past. The general aim was to discern and analyze the sociological reasons that encourage and/or inhibit women's participation in public life. The working hypothesis was that the purported friction between tradition and modernity was false and that the dichotomy could be demonstrably challenged through a systematic exploration of women's experiences, both past and present. Part of this task comprised qualitatively mapping the continuities between past and present generations of women. Another element comprised qualitatively mapping the perseverance and ongoing strength of gender discrimination in the "modern era" in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

## Keywords

women's identity, women's self-image, traditions, women's roles, modernity, public participation

## Introduction

The development of constitutional laws and gender equality are indicative of an improving society in general. Societies are increasingly empowering women, promoting their participation in the workforce, and advancing their political rights to become actively involved in the advancement of their communities. The recent history of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, is characterized by several decades of modernization, which has advanced women's educational levels, employment opportunities and access to leadership roles. Similarly, the democratic process becomes more inclusive when women are involved, and the notion of equal opportunities of the sexes is enhanced by replacing the cultural concepts of gender roles with those of qualifications and social, cultural, and human rights.

Despite the progress women have made in education and employment in the GCC region, the conditions for women are fragile and challenging when it comes to participating actively in the public sphere, political authority and decision-making roles. The indicators showed that

women's participation in the labor force in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries lags behind that other regions; however, for some GCC countries, this indicator is still lower than the MENA average: In 2018, 39% of the global workforce was made up of women, but in MENA, this share was just 20.3% (Abousleman, 2019). Other barriers to equality for women in the region include governments' refusal to enact laws that promote gender equality, the insufficient number of awareness programs and protection systems, the political and economic situation of the community, or a combination of all or some of these factors (Arab Human Development Report, 2005; United Nations Development Programme, 2014).

The social structure in GCC societies has a clear division of roles and a hierarchic authority system based on

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gender. This role division and patriarchal system are rooted in the tribal system found in the Arab world; this system is based on the concepts of kinship and tribalism that formed because of historical, geographical, and cultural conditions (Al-Haidari, 2003; Sharabi, 1993). Altorki (2012) presented a historical analysis of the family structure in the region in the Ottoman era, the late Ottoman era, and the early post-Ottoman period that illustrates women's status in the family structure, where men authorized women. Salem and Yount (2019) argued that "women's need to work in societies historically characterized by classic patriarchy causes them to enact strategic accommodations that signal their feminine respectability and conformity to male domination" (p. 501). It has also been found that many young women give preference "to family over work and education (Salem & Yount, 2019)" The multiple roles and duties of women as wives, mothers, and employees have also become a source of criticism, where household sex roles clash with those of work outside the home.

Hornborg (2005) noted that the division between tradition and modernity is not a line by which the various peoples of the world should be divided; rather, it is a tension in the center of society's collective—and each individual's—existence. We propose the truth of this sentiment as we consider the lived experiences of women in the GCC states: These women are both traditional and modern and live with significant contradictions in their lives. The current ethnographically grounded research explores the experience of womanhood in contemporary Qatar. Our examination of women's identity, their history, and its ongoing construction through public images provides a broader perspective of the region and insights into the strategies women have used to navigate these contradictions, with the practical result being better facilitating women's participation in public life and in Qatar's emergent knowledge-based economy. The results also help to better inform the growing academic literature on women in the Middle East.

## **Women's Empowerment in the GCC Region**

According to Kabeer (1999), "empowerment entails a process of change. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful," and "indicators of women's empowerment have to be sensitive to the ways in which context will shape processes of empowerment. Access to new resources may open up new possibilities for women, but they are unlikely to seek to realize these possibilities in uniform ways" (p. 460). Oxaal and Baaden (1997) described empowerment as being about the ability to make choices and corresponds to challenging existing power structures that subordinate women.

As such, women's empowerment can help women access resources and create a much more equitable balance between the demands of tradition and the process of socioeconomic modernization in GCC region (Al-Rawi, 2021). Assigning what is appropriate grants "awareness" of the primary condition associated with increasing women's ability to access resources, education and employment opportunities within the context of the economic growth in Qatar (Al-Attayah & Nasser, 2016; McKanders, 2019).

In many senses, the dramatic modernization of the GCC states has granted many rights to women, enabling their advancement and participation in public life. Education has been central to Qatar's diversification strategy, and women continue to demonstrate success in this area. Furthermore, legal changes have opened politics to women, which has advanced the empowerment of women toward reaching equality with men. Until very recently, the governments in the GCC countries had ensured that women are actively involved in decision-making and public life. The 2004 permanent Qatar constitution granted women equal citizenship rights with men, and the 1998 electoral law of the municipal council affirmed the equal rights of men and women to run for elected office. Regarding female candidates, in 2003, the first round of elections included six Qatari women (none of whom were elected); in the second round of elections, there was only one candidate. Although municipal council elections are open to Qatari women, only one candidate has been successful in four cycles.

Notably, these legal and rights-based changes have not significantly altered the reality of women's positions in Qatari society; indeed, women have not overcome all the obstacles to gain their individuality in the public sphere (Rafferty, 2013). Thus, although educational achievement is increasingly the norm for Qatari women, translating those achievements into successful careers remains difficult. Overall, women's experiences continue to lag behind the expressed wishes of the state and its diversification policy. The nature of this problem points to broader social and cultural factors that continue to influence and limit women's participation and success in this rapidly modernizing society. Women's involvement in society remains limited and does not fulfill the developmental needs of Arab countries (Aldabbagh & Grey, 2012; Krause, 2009), as they have had less success reaching parity in politics, decision-making, sports, and the media. Hence, the increase in women with specialized scientific degrees has not affected the number of women in leadership positions.

Power factors, such as work, economic independence, and the empowerment of women (i.e., expanding the scope of the ability to obtain resources)—which necessitate bringing together education and changes of a legal

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Can women work the same night hours as men?	✓			✓		
Can women do the same jobs as men?						
Can women work in jobs deemed hazardous in the same way as men?	✓					
Can women work in jobs deemed morally or socially inappropriate in the same way as men?	✓		✓		✓	
Can women work in jobs deemed arduous in the same way as men?					✓	
Can women work in mining in the same way as men?			✓	✓		
Can women work in factories in the same way as men?			✓	✓		
Can women work in construction in the same way as men?			✓	✓		✓
Can women work in the water sector in the same way as men?			✓	✓		✓
Can women work in energy in the same way as men?			✓	✓		
Can women work in transportation in the same way as men?	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Can women work in metalworking in the same way as men?			✓	✓		
Can women engage in jobs requiring lifting weights above a threshold in the same way as men?		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Can women work in all other jobs in the same way as men?			✓	✓		

**Figure 1.** Jobs and sector preferences based on gender.

Source: Report adopted from World Bank Group (2018), pp. 3–20. URL: <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/original/WBLKeyFindingsWebFINAL.pdf>. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO.

nature—may not always lead to women accessing sources of power. As a result, for women in the GCC region, having a good education does not mean that they can change their positions; thus, women have had low participation in the domain of economics, decreasing their impact on the domain of public life (Arab Human Development Report, 2005). Findlow (2013) described the educational system, especially higher education in the GCC states, and raised important questions about the extent to which higher education has affected what women think about themselves and has created an awareness of their rights. Findlow (2013) reported that one of her interviewees (a graduate woman) said, “We are equal but different. I mean, we have our rights, but our rights are different from the men’s rights” (p. 120).

Studies have shown that societal norms determine women’s choice of jobs and sector preferences (Al-Shibani & Salah, 2010; Shallal, 2011), and GCC societies have adopted a package of favorite occupations for women based on the stereotypes of what constitutes women’s work. Another study showed that when compared with men, women’s opportunities in the workforce and job preferences remain more directed by family (Zakaria, 2013). As shown in Figure 1, for social issues, most of the GCC states have similar trends of job perspective related to both genders, particularly the

segregation regarding women’s involvement in public life. The check marks denote places where the answer is “yes.”

Despite empowerment initiatives, women in the GCC region are not treated equally in the labor market in terms of when and in what sectors they can work and what tasks they can perform (i.e., working night hours; doing the same jobs as men; doing socially inappropriate work; working in factories; working in the construction, mining, water, energy, transportation, and metalworking industries; and lifting heavy weights). The report justifies that the restrictions are mainly that such jobs are deemed hazardous and arduous for women. Although many changes have occurred in Qatari women’s roles, and their status has improved, several obstacles related to family structures, relationships, social norms, and women’s self-image prevent them from attaining their full potential.

### Conceptual Links Between Modernity and Traditions

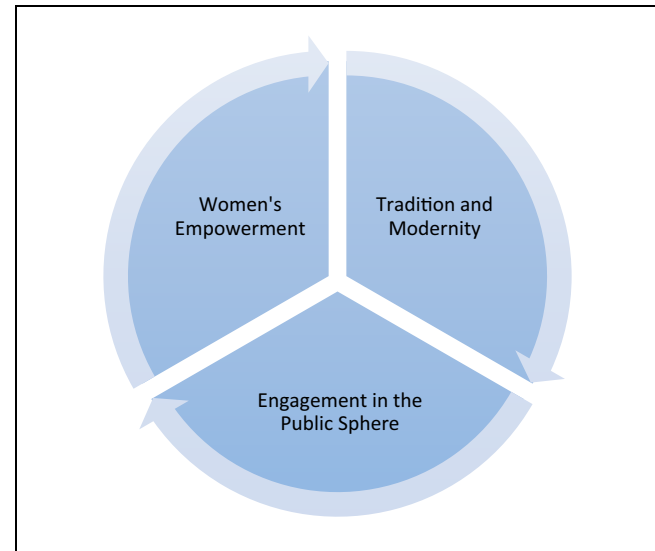
Previous studies have focused on social structures and how they facilitate or inhibit the participation of the members of a certain social class in public life. Kohn (1989) pointed out that social structures create positions. Individuals, male or female, are supposed to act in these

positions within the social structures at different stages of their lives. Thus, members are likely to fall into these positions unless the social structures are changed. Based on the discussions in Salmi (2009) and Al-Haidari (2012), there are defined roles relevant to the cultural set of most Arab nations, including Qatar. Cultural practices are among the social phenomena envisaged by Merton (1968), and they create intended and unintended functions in any society.

A study of families in Qatar showed that the distribution of family responsibilities continues in the traditional pattern, where women's main duties are caring for children and doing housework (Al-Kubaisi, 2010). Another study found that women's participation does not reflect equal partnership in family decision-making (Al-Othman, 2006), even after four decades of urbanization, traditional family relationships continue to influence women's daily lives in Arab societies, as women fear "divorce, [are] uncertain about customary family safety nets, and thus [desire] financial independence so they would be able to support themselves if they were left alone later in life due to divorce, or the death of their husband" (James-Hawkins et al., 2017, p. 155). These roles have been affected by the great strides made respecting to the access to education and modernization of the Arab nations. Societal norms define the characteristics of women's work; thus, their roles in public life match societal norms. This ties into the purpose of the current paper and highlights some factors that could encourage or hinder the participation of women in public life in Qatar.

There is a causal connection between societal norms and women's empowerment; however, this perspective fails to pay proper attention to the role of women's experience and attitudes, which are often at the root of their behaviors. Moreover, the literature on the GCC states has given undue weight to women's education, and the results may overrepresent the views of those who are educated rather than the whole population. Finally, understanding women's real experiences would lead to better integration of women into public life. The current paper considers the hypothesis that there is no friction between tradition and modernity in Qatar and that this purported friction cannot be used as a valid explanation of the challenges women face in Qatar regarding their engagement in public life. Previous studies have shown some gaps that need to be filled to present a conclusive ethnographic study of Qatari women's participation in public life.

The current study fills the gaps in the literature by reviewing studies on women's empowerment in the GCC states and women's self-image and empowerment in the Arab region. We focus on the attitudes relating to the past and present experiences of Qatari women to illustrate how tradition and modernity affect Qatari women's



**Figure 2.** Summary of the explored conceptual links.

participation in the public sphere. Furthermore, an examination of women's identity and history is linked to the ongoing construction of women's identity through public images, helping provide insights into the strategies women have used to navigate these contradictions, with the practical result being better facilitation of women's participation in public life and in Qatar's emerging knowledge-based economy.

Figure 2 shows the hypothetical links between the experiences of Qatari women. First, we aimed to measure the correlation between the role of women's empowerment and the key challenges women face in their engagement in the public sphere by extracting their attitudes and experiences.

Based on theories in the literature, we expect that the interviewed women will address the nature of the changes in the GCC region. We also expect the women to report diverse experiences. Social phenomena in societies are not a result of conflicts in society; rather, they are what hold society together. In most instances, conflicts define the relationship between different factions in a society, for example, members of the male or female gender. In societies, social phenomena are characterized by their traditional past and modern present, eliminating the assumption of friction between tradition and modernity, such as defining the boundaries of women's participation in the public life of their country. The roles of women in public life in Qatar continue to be regarded as inferior to those of men, even when women and men have equal education and access to public life.

The literature has made substantial contributions toward unearthing the reasons for and against women's involvement in public life in Qatar. Giddens (1991) referred to social structures and demonstrated that Arab nations have stable social structures that define the

meanings of institutions within public life and the roles each gender is supposed to play. This relates to the study by Kohn (1989), which based its claim on social structures as the determinant of individuals' roles in society. Women are considered wives to their husbands, mothers to their children, and so forth. Thus, roles, even those outside the family are set up and designed to mirror the social relationships inherent within society (Henriques, 1999). This point is similar to those of Giddens (1991) and Kohn (1989), who referenced the social structures within the GCC states that determine the type of role that women can play in the public life of their nations.

Most of the related literature has faulted the social structures inherent within the GCC nations as a significant hindrance to women's involvement in the public life of their communities. However, most of the literature has not called for an overhaul of the societal structures within the GCC nations. An understanding of the social structures with a view of women being brought into the system as active members in the public life of their nations is needed. Here, a radical strand of the literature has called for the alteration of systems to increase women's integration based on competencies—not social structures (AlGharaibeh, 2011; Al Mutawa, 2002; Al-Najjar, 2003).

### Women's Self-Image

In the last few years, women's identity has emerged as a controversial topic in Qatar and other GCC countries. The transitional phases of society—and women in particular—with the tides of today's identity clashes that predominate in social, cultural, and political spaces. Merton (1968) considered that every social phenomenon has a manifest, latent function. As he suggested, "The investigation of this function is valuable in the detection of the mechanism of interference in institutional needs with specific roles, expectations, norms, individual desires, and expectations, to reveal the internal conflicts or stability in the social system" (pp. 114–116). Thus, although there may be various social changes in a social system, the expected results may not be realized because of the inherent social phenomenon in a society. In the same context, Kohn (1989) argued, "Positions in social structures impinge differently on individuals' lives at different stages of their life-courses and it may be that social-structural positions affect their incumbents differently at different historical times" (p. 29).

Giddens (1991) emphasized that identity belongs to the social institutions that transfer general meanings through language (e.g., traditions, institutions, moral

standards of behaviors, and other expectations). Notably, these structures seem to be stable, especially in periods in which individuals begin to ignore the symbols of culture or where they are modified, replaced, or reproduced in a different manner. Individuals usually abide by these rules during interactions with others even when they are limited in their selection of potential actions because of the influence of various factors (e.g., upbringing, circumstances, and experiences); however, individuals can also modify their positions. Giddens (1991) emphasized that the positions of individuals and their ideas, values, and patterns of behavior may change. In our analysis, identity is relative and may change because of several factors. Perhaps the most important choice is an individual's position on new situations. Notably, because individual interest is an essential element in maintaining identity, whenever social institutions do not protect their members, a state of cultural change will occur, and the cultural identity will become controversial.

One of the most significant aspects of the clash between modernity and tradition concerns the image of women (Al-Rawi, 2021). Henriques and Calhoun (1999) argued that women are socially created based on a set of social relationships that exist in all societies and are subject to the impositions of traditional values. Women have described their self-image using the following terms: disempowered, wife; daughter; housewife; mother; grandmother; total subordination while displaying obedience and service; animal; not a free, independent individual; and a commodity for men (Henriques & Calhoun, 1999). After describing women's self-images, Henriques and Calhoun (1999) argued that these characteristics are not naturally determined by biology but are social constructs. The social behavioral development of men and women is the outcome of the prevailing social values of any society; thus, this changes over time because of an awareness of the constraints on self-image, which leads to change. Liloia (2019) argued that "founded on representations of women as both symbols of tradition and markers of modernity, to facilitate modern development.... and construct a national identity" (p. 344).

According to James-Hawkins et al. (2017), Arab cultural contexts influence how women describe their plans for education, labor force participation, marriage, and childbearing. It has been argued that while many Qatari women express "affinities to patriarchal values," there seems to be a growing trend for the development of "critical attitudes toward some patriarchal values, and signs of individuality in developing different perceptions" (Al Naimi, 2021, p. 1). In addition, as women's circumstances of women have evolved, there is now a greater

interest in the education of girls and the acceptance of their working outside the home before or after marriage. This results in many cases in women's professional careers being relegated, which magnifies the presence of the patriarchal system (Al-Rawi, 2021); this is most visibly manifested in the idea that a woman's primary role is in the home, caring for the children and looking after the husband. In addition, "one of the main challenges women face in obtaining leadership positions arises from the largely male-dominated kinship relations that control and regulate all aspects of life" (Abdulkadir & Müller, as cited in Kubbe & Varraich, 2019, p. 188). This is especially true when it comes to women's participation in public life, and this topic is the cornerstone of the current research.

Some research has faulted the education system in most of the GCC nations for gender inequality, stating that the education system encourages women to accept their roles as defined by their respective societies, leading them to appreciate that the roles defined by society are adequate and that they should not aspire to further involve themselves in the public lives of their nations. However, most of the literature agrees that social structures are a key factor in determining the levels of public life involvement for women in GCC nations. Thus, further research is necessary to relate social structures to other emerging factors, such as education systems, assessing how such social structures continue to thrive in modernity. The working hypothesis for the overarching project contended that the purported friction between tradition and modernity was false and that the dichotomy could be demonstrably challenged by the systematic exploration of women's experiences, both past and present. We address these expectations using a historical method that explains the situation of Qatari women in more detail.

### *Methodology*

To address the hypothesis, the present study utilized semi-structured ethnographic interviews (Bernard, 2011) with contemporary Qatari women to explore their identity, their experiences, and the interaction of identity and experiences with the contemporary social structure. The paper also deploys a historical method to explore these aspects of women's identity, experiences, and perspectives in the past. Thus, a series of ethnographic interviews was used to complement historical methods of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews are an ideal method for exploring these issues because they approach the subject and conversation with a guided topic outline while facilitating the subject's capacity to guide the conversation to topics or issues that the subject considers important or noteworthy. In practice, this encapsulates and

justifies the semi-structured interview: An interview guide provides the researcher with a basic framework and set of topics to guide the conversation, but the open-ended nature of the process allows the subject to steer the conversation to points or topics that the subject sees as important. In ethnographic interviews, both these aspects are seen as integral. The ethnographic data from this process are not just responses or answers to preordained topics but are also the topics, discussions, and ethnographic data of unforeseen importance to the research team. In deploying these qualitative ethnographic methods, the ideal result was a transcription of a natural, organic conversation that could discuss the research topic(s) in depth.

Using a purposive nonrandom sample, the research team interviewed Qatari women in 2012. The purpose was to capture the diversity of the Qatari population. The research team sought to include women of various age groups, kinship backgrounds, class positions, marital statuses, education levels, occupations, and a variety of other characteristics. Within this diversity, we particularly emphasized the inclusion of Qatari women with variable education levels and experiences in the workforce. In particular, the total number of contemporary women interviewed was 50 women, including 25 unemployed and 25 working women. Participants were aged between 18 and 44 years.

The residential areas were divided into three areas that included a sample of northern Qatar (the municipalities of Al Shamal, Al Khor, Umm Salal and Al Daayen), a sample in the east and south of Qatar (the municipalities of Doha and Al-Wakra), and a sample of central and western Qatar (Al Rayyan municipality). The sample of women who did not work had educational levels in the categories of "secondary school," "diploma," "university degree," and "master's degree." The sample of working women had educational levels from "illiteracy" to "primary school," "middle school," "secondary school," and "university degree." After explaining the project and its goals and receiving informed consent from the participants, the responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a modified grounded analysis approach (Emerson et al., 1995; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Interviews were typically performed in the women's homes; some participants opted to meet in other locations, such as at Qatar University or in their workplaces.

### *Analysis of the Findings*

The interview guide was organized into 10 topics. These topics were conceived as entry points for an exploration of gender, its meaning in the GCC region, its articulation in the sociocultural sphere, and the impact of gender discrimination on Qatari women's pathways through life.



The topics were birth, youth and adolescence, marriage, education, social status, family, religion, the public sphere, Qatar's oral tradition, and the role of women in the media. Although not every woman spoke on every topic, the interview transcriptions as a whole comprise a trove of noteworthy ethnographic data. The women illuminated numerous issues concerning contemporary Qatari women, provided some insights into their experiences and perspectives, and addressed the study's hypothesis.

The interview transcriptions were analyzed in Arabic using MAXQDA software, and the coded segments were translated into English to allow findings to emerge from the significant themes inherent in the raw data. A thematic analysis was conducted. Then, the list of coding categories was reviewed to identify wider thematic attributes, connecting them to combine the attributes into main themes. Subsequently, some countervailing themes emerged from the analysis. Although the depth and nuance of these ethnographic data lead in various directions, the present analysis focuses on the discussion of five crosscutting themes that were common in the many interview responses and topics discussed. In order, the crosscutting themes and topics reviewed in this study are as follows: *women and education; gender and adolescence in the Qatari experience; marriage and selecting a spouse; and family, patriarchy, and responsibility.*

One of the overarching themes that characterized the interviews was the diversity of experiences and perspectives reported by the women. On a wide variety of subjects discussed in those interviews, the women described different types of experiences and voiced different perspectives and outlooks about these experiences. This overarching finding resonates with other scholarly work on gender and the role of women in GCC states. Foley (2010), for example, concluded that women's sociopolitical position in the region "is hardly uniform" (p. 170) and noted the vectors of nationality, class, ethnicity, family, and many more that generate this variation. The variability observed in the ethnographic data challenges the notion of Qatar as a singular, homogeneous sociocultural environment, and it provides evidence of social diversity among Qatar's small citizenry. This apparent diversity is a noteworthy overarching finding of the project and frames the discussion below.

### **Women and Education**

Education emerged as one of the areas with the most significant agency and change for Qatari women. By 2009, women represented more than 75% of the student population on the campuses of higher education in Qatar, and Qatari women with postsecondary qualifications outnumbered Qatari men almost two to one (Berrebi et al.,

2009; Krause, 2012, pp. 90–91). Their relatively higher education levels make Qatari women uniquely poised to contribute to the plural, cosmopolitan, and transnational "knowledge-based society" that Qatar envisions for its future. In the women's experiences and perspectives, there is ample evidence of this substantive change but also evidence of a conservative, resistant sociocultural backdrop that places many women at a confusing juncture where their opportunities meet an education conflict with traditional cultural norms.

Almost all the interviewees lauded the value of higher education in their lives and in the lives of Qatari women more broadly. Although Western scholarship has traditionally focused on the potential freedom(s) resulting from women having more control over their income as members of the workforce resulting from higher education, financial and material gains from education were only one facet of Qatari women's descriptions of the benefits of higher education. Many women also conceptualized the benefits of higher education in psychological terms; for example, education has opened their minds, helped them understand their community, made them better mothers, and made them feel useful to the Qatari state.

As one participant noted, "Education has a role in rearing your children and in their education." Another participant added that education "helps us raise our kids correctly," and a third added that "mothers have to learn because technology is developing every day, and if she is unaware of it, she will not be able to bring up children properly." These are three of the many examples in the interviews of how the women articulated the contribution of education to their motherhood. As a 26-year-old college graduate stated, "Of course, the benefits of education are extremely important. It opens our minds, helps us develop our style, and increases our awareness. It also helps us rear our children correctly, and of course, it's useful at work." Another woman, also a college graduate, added that "the educated woman will not only benefit from the experience but she'll gain self-confidence, and she'll learn how to interact with people." In essence, these women recognized higher education as a site where cultural capital is accumulated and articulated the value of that cultural capital in their capacities to navigate public life. In addition, as the woman quoted above noted, many of these descriptions of higher education's value are its contribution in terms that are amenable to Qatari traditional norms: With higher education, women can be better mothers and better individuals.

Although the women interviewed almost universally reported support and encouragement from their families regarding their educational aspirations, this same area was also where they encountered systemic discrimination and differentiation. These forces shaped their pathways

through life. In the interviews, almost all the participants described their parents' attitudes as supportive of their entry into Qatar's higher education system; some parents even demanded it, and many women had the freedom to pursue their interests at university. However, freedom, agency, and support began to erode when these women described two common junctures in their pathways through the higher education system. First, for some women, the gender-mixed campuses of Education City were *haram* [forbidden]. These attitudes were not ubiquitous and were certainly more firmly based in the aging generation of parents. Second, those same attitudes and prohibitions were even more apparent in the more widespread difficulties of women in pursuing higher education degrees abroad; they reported that this was prohibited, disallowed, or otherwise not possible.

When describing the challenges the women faced and perceived in their pathways through the education system in Qatar, they oscillated when describing the reason or source of the prohibitions and norms they challenged. Some women located the source of these attitudes as coming from their parents; other women described these prohibitions as a familial norm (they used the wider conception of "family" that predominates throughout the region). Still other women framed these attitudes and prohibitions as a customary cultural norm and as practices and norms interwoven with Qatari, or even Arab, society and history.

In general terms, scholars have readily acknowledged education, particularly the higher education system, as a means to increase women's empowerment in rapidly developing and rapidly changing societies (Foley, 2010). The advances of women in the educational sector are substantial, and this is supported by the evidence in these interviews, especially because the education "sector" remains one of few areas where women's institutional leadership is most evident. However, when reporting their experiences, the interviewees also described how the social context of their educational aspirations had continued to shape their options and choices. In a sense, they remained consigned to the "particular frame" described by the elderly participants that is focused on values emanating from a system infused with tribal affiliation, patriarchy, kinship, and tradition, and this continues to be an influential aspect of contemporary Qatari life. Although many of the women portrayed these attitudes and prohibitions as a simple fact of life, evidence of the friction between this customary body of norms and their modernized aspirations is centrally featured in the data.

### *Gender and Adolescence in the Qatari Experience*

The part of the interviews exploring women's perspectives and experiences during their formative period of

young adulthood traversed multiple topics. In general, youth and adolescence is a key period in the enculturation of Qatari youth: As children emerge into young adulthood, they begin to explore the social world beyond their family and home. Thus, parents, family, and society inform these journeys and instruct adolescents on the complexities of Qatari social norms. This process of gendered acculturation was strikingly evident in the experiences of the interviewed women.

When asked to describe some gendered prohibitions the women encountered in their youth, many reported that in their adolescence, as they began to venture outside the confines of the familial house, these gendered differences became both enforced and apparent. A 45-year-old woman said, "My brothers would play outside and go anywhere they wanted, but we girls? No, because my mother is always supposed to be with us." Other women recalled similar experiences in adolescence. One said, "Boys can go anywhere they like, any *Majlis* [a place where men gather], for example, but we can go only to our grandmother's house or our aunts' houses." Another said, "They [the boys] go to the market or play football outside, but we can't do that, only with our father or mother."

Although the described experiences and recollections seem distant from the types of participation in the public sphere that mature, adult women in Qatar now sometimes seek, they provide two important vantage points regarding the challenges of women in the contemporary era. First, they are evidence of the breadth of the "customary norms" that broadly manifest in the adult public sphere. From this perspective, the customary norms that often prevent women from seeking higher education abroad and the general consignment of Qatari women to careers and professions in certain gendered sectors of the contemporary workforce are aspects of these "customary norms." That is, adolescent male children are encouraged to venture into this public sphere, even in the context of their neighborhood. Women, by contrast, begin to learn of the customary parameters that they are restricted from entering the public sphere. Second, these women's recollections and experiences are also evidence of the subtle process of enculturation by which these customary norms are transferred from generation to generation, and they simultaneously persevere in the contemporary era.

In various contexts, the interviewees described how the parameters and the resulting behaviors were related to more than cultural customary norms. Often, as in most other societies, the different gendered behaviors were related to fundamental differences in the psychological constitution of the sexes (e.g., Costa et al., 2001). When describing whether male or female children in her family were more attentive to her parents' words and views, one woman said, "Girls just listen more than



boys. That's natural. During the adolescent period, boys are difficult to control, but girls basically stay the same." When asked the same question, another woman suggested that the answer was obvious: "Everyone knows that it's the girls [who listen more to their parents]." These stereotypes relate to ideas of Qatari social history and are a product of the region-wide patriarchal gender culture in the contemporary era. However, these comments also suggest that in contemporary perspectives on gender in Qatari society, a biological foundation naturalizes gendered behaviors and brings children into alignment with perceived customary norms. These biologically grounded notions are the wellspring from which the vitality and strength of the Qatari notion of family originates, but as a byproduct of that wellspring, women's entry into the public sphere is constrained.

### *Contemporary Women and Marriage Formation*

The tension between the rapid social change underpinning the modern era in Qatar and contemporary manifestations of Qatari customary practices are frequently visible in the experiences women described regarding marriage. The interviewed women described experiences and perspectives that portray the variation and diversity of the practices that have emerged at the junction between the maintenance of traditional customary norms and the new practices related to modernity, consumerism, and cosmopolitan culture. In the practice of finding a spouse, women in today's Qatar are in a prototypical position where they are slowly but steadily expanding those traditions, and within them, exploring the flexibilities that might accommodate new practices and concerns.

In Qatari tradition, marriage provides a mechanism for building familial and tribal alliances. As a result, cousin marriages were often the norm, underpinned by a dowry system in which the groom's family provided a substantial payment in the form of a gift or gifts to the bride and her family. The selection of a spouse was guided and sometimes arranged by parents and other elders in the respective families. This system disempowered the bride in the selection of her spouse. Our interviews with women across generations revealed that many aspects of this traditional system remain foundational in Qatar today. The dowry payment, now generally referred to as *dazza* (a term that refers to a trousseau, a cloth prepared for the bride and interwoven with money and other gifts of value), continues to be a central feature of Qatari marriage. The women reported amounts from QAR 20,000 to QAR 180,000. This money is often (although not always) received by the father of the bride and then (again, not always) transferred directly to the bride. Multiple variations in this practice were reported—

payments transferred directly to the bride, payments retained by the bride's father, and payments retained by the bride's parents. The bride's family is also typically responsible for the engagement parties, which are now often held at wedding halls and other similar facilities.

Selecting a spouse remains a juncture where traditions are actively negotiated. A few of the interviewees reported that the decision was entirely theirs. One woman said, "I am the owner of that decision." Although a handful of women reported similar circumstances as a measure of the contemporary diversity of practices in this area of Qatari life, women more commonly described how parents and families have remained intricately involved in these decisions, and customary concerns remain a central feature in their selection of a spouse. One 45-year-old Qatari woman recollected the circumstances behind her marriage: "My family consulted with me and discussed the quality of the potential groom and his tribal affiliation because some tribes are not acceptable for us to marry." A 26-year-old woman related that per Qatari customary norms, "My cousin proposed to me three times, but I refused. I had the freedom to refuse, but my community pressured me to accept his proposal. My mother and father never did that. And when my [eventual] husband finally proposed, my father said, 'If you want to satisfy me, take him.' I thought about it, and then accepted." Both of these comments reveal the extent of familial and tribal involvement in the selection of a spouse but also clarify how some Qatari women and their families have altered those traditions in the modern era.

In the most comprehensive sense, the interviewees described how "consultation" has become an integral feature of the rapid social change characterizing marriage practices in contemporary Qatar. Although parents, families, tribes, and the "community," as described by the interviewee above, continue to play a central role in the selection of a groom for many women, "consultation" by fathers and the family with the bride is an area where diverse contemporary practices can be observed. For example, a 23-year-old woman stated, "When a man proposed to marry me, my family would meet with him to decide whether he fits me or not. Then they would consult with me and allow me to give my decision freely. If I refused, we would discuss the reasons for my refusal." Another woman described how her "mother-in-law talked with my mother about the proposal. Then my mother informed my father, and my father informed me. He gave me a time limit on my decision. I thought about it, I prayed, and then I accepted the offer."

Through consultations, individual families depart from the norms of customary practice, and in some circumstances, empower women to choose their spouses. Navigating these customary norms through the

expansion of “consultation” is a notably deft development: Women—and to some degree their families—have used this “consultation” to expand women’s power in the decisions regarding a potential spouse but have done so without challenging the patriarchal customary norms and the overall influence of the family, including the extended family. In a superficial sense, marriage practices and the selection of a spouse often resemble the customary norms in Qatar. However, as these ethnographic interviews reveal, the diversity and variability of actual practices suggest that this area of contemporary Qatari women’s lives is also one of significant social change.

### *Family, Patriarchy, and Responsibility*

Although selecting a partner presents a particular, noteworthy juncture in Qatari women’s lives, many of the interviews explored how gender shapes the structure of decision making and responsibility in their families. The ethnographic evidence concerning Qatari women’s experiences with adolescence and youth (above) described a steady, subtle enculturation that establishes gender roles aligned with a conservative, traditional ethos, albeit one with some variation in the contemporary era. In one part of the interviews, the women described their experiences and perspectives regarding their role in the power structure of the modern Qatari household.

The interviewees generally described a patriarchal norm that encompasses the Qatari household and is interwoven in Qatari society. With the rapid social change in the region, the household is becoming an increasingly vital functional unit in society, and a patriarchal hierarchy generally predominates. Reflecting the perspectives of many of the interviewees, one 47-year-old Qatari woman said that although a husband and wife may “cooperate on certain issues, the final decision is for the man.” In describing and evaluating these relations, most women described the appropriate use of that patriarchal power, with a heavy focus on the necessity of consultation. One woman from the same generation said that although “discussion happens between men and women, the final decision is for the man.” A younger participant (25 years old) described her parents’ relationship and said, “My father consults with my mother. He mostly listens to her, but not always.”

Some women framed the same issues and the ideal of “consultation” a bit differently. For example, a woman said, “Authority in the house belongs to the husband. I have an important role in the house, but the last decision is his.” The idea was commonplace of a patriarchal “final decision,” one tempered by notions of a gender-appropriate division of labor in household responsibilities. For example, some women described particular

spheres of influence in the household. A 44-year-old interviewee said, “Choosing the schools for the boys and girls was my decision because I am the one who is taking care of their study and education.” A 36-year-old college graduate framed the gendered division of labor in different terms: “Authority in the house is for the father, and supervision is for the mother.” Collating the various threads in this commonplace perspective of the gendered division of household responsibility, one woman said, “Authority [in the household] should be shared between a man and a woman. With some issues, the husband should have the decisive decision, and in some issues the woman should have the decisive decision. And there should always be consultation between them!”

Although the management and oversight of the contemporary Qatari household is a significant, complex responsibility, the beliefs and perceived customary norms behind this division of labor are an obstacle to Qatari women entering the public sphere. However, the gendered division of labor and the disempowering consignment of Qatari women to the household and certain familial responsibilities should not be framed as an isolated juncture but as the manifestation of a body of customary norms and perceived social traditions that thread through Qatari women’s experiences in adolescence and youth, during their time in the education system, and through their selection of a husband. Moreover, relative to this “traditional” Qatari ethos, variability and exceptions were frequently observed in the interviews.

One woman described how her mother’s power dramatically increased when her father was away traveling for work. Another noted that since her father died, her mother had become the head of the household. At other times, these exceptions to the customary norms were simply personal and individual decisions within a marriage. A 48-year-old Qatari woman recalled, “When we [she and her husband] first got married, his salary was QAR 4000 and he used to give it all to me, just keeping a little bit for cigarettes. I was managing our household finances.” These exceptions and this general variability are most probably correlated with the atomization of the Qatari family in the contemporary era, the enhancement of the family as a nuclear unit, and the relative disempowerment of the extended familial and tribal connections that have formed the social matrix of Qatari social tradition. Through this process, a higher degree of familial variability relative to these conservative customary norms has resulted.

### *Women’s Identity*

The interviews demonstrated that the traditional motifs and dominant gender discourse in Qatar portray women as not having a consciousness independent

from their social context. When conceptualizing their identity and place in society, the women described their roles as complementary in some areas and dependent in others. Indeed, *complementary* and *dependent* serve as the endpoints of the same continuum along which women's identities are calculated. As a result, contemporary women do not fully develop independent convictions related to their entry into the public sphere and their participation in public life. With the rapid modernization and social change in Qatar, there are many pathways, including education and employment, along which this independence could be fostered and developed.

As the present study revealed, women continue to use community and familial norms as an umbrella for their social movement. Women's image as being complementary or dependent regarding every social and economic topic this project explored also reflects that men continue to function as the central reference point for the identities that women construct in the public sphere. Only the employed women reported anything approximating a feeling of independence, and this may be more of a result of conflicts with husbands or other family members—an independence achieved only through the central male reference point. Overall, the identity of a Qatari woman remains configured around men. Thus, contemporary Qatari women's gender is more related to social norms, strictures, and social practices than to a woman's aspirations and needs. In this sense, Qatari women's identity reflects Qatari society's broader cultural identity. That cultural identity has allowed women to have only a submissive position, forcing them to accept a temporal, spatial framework for their social movement.

## Discussion

From the literature review and the results of the current research, it is evident that sociological factors affect the degree to which women participate in public life. It is clear that inherent sociological factors have determined the role played by women in Qatar, irrespective of their educational background and all forms of achievement (Merton, 1968). There are areas where men will always be preferred over women, even when women have the same or higher qualifications and expertise. The reason for this is the social fabric of the Qatari community. This is a largely patriarchal society with defined gender roles, where women are required to fit in seamlessly. Even in circumstances where women are required or desire to fulfill bigger roles within the public sphere, their social roles—for example, familial roles—are a higher priority. This phenomenon has pushed women down in the hierarchy when compared with men.

As noted in the introduction, the conflict between modernity and tradition could be cited as a main reason for the continued alienation of women from public life which is an ongoing entrenchment of the cultural and sociological order of Qatari society and that of most Arab nations. Inasmuch as education is becoming a more acceptable phenomenon for women, the social fabric in society has not changed (Kohn, 1989). Thus, there is no association with a perceived conflict between modernity and tradition. The position of women in Qatar has undergone a major process of social and cultural transformation (Al-Attayah & Nasser, 2016), which is shaping new paradigms of femininity among Qatari women, as well as a gradual process of transformation in social relations, which have traditionally been based on patriarchal principles (McKanders, 2019).

As other scholars have noted, women are the vanguard of modernity and social change in the Arab world (Dresch, 2005, p. 24; Foley, 2010; Krause, 2012, p. 100); they are caught in the frictions resulting from rapid social change. The literature review and findings of the current study have revealed that Qatari women are aware of the roles that their society has defined for them. Many women noted that they were unable to attain the same levels of involvement in public life as their male counterparts (Findlow, 2013); others saw the need for change so that they could hold positions on merit and not be barred from active participation in public life. Still others were comfortable performing their defined roles. In this sense, it is worth noting that the influence of the values of modernity has not affected the image of "the feminine" in Qatari society or the region in general (Al-Attayah & Nasser, 2016).

A study of gender and women in the United Arab Emirates (Al-Oraimi, 2004, p. 316) charted a consciously nonconfrontational position that women create as a pathway to increased political power. Indeed, the scope of these experiences and challenges is infused throughout the lives of contemporary Qatari women. While public protesting has never been the principal strategy by which women in GCC nations seek political power (Krause, 2012, p. 102), much of the friction charted in these interviews occurs within the status quo view equality for men as being different from equality for women. This points to a sociological system that is ordered to define roles for genders, ensuring that there are different forms of jobs and activities for men and women.

## Conclusion

The current study provide a detailed portrayal of the topology of traditional customary Qatari norms (as they are perceived) in the contemporary era. Qatari women are infused with the aspirations produced in a

cosmopolitan context, but they are expected to accommodate customary norms and values. More specifically, the interviews portrayed the perseverance and ongoing role that customary norms play in contemporary women's lives. Enculturation into the gendered roles that are prescribed through these customary norms begins early in life, and by midlife, these roles appear to be a vague but constant factor in shaping women's decisions, roles, and aspirations. The perceived customary norms, which are interwoven in the social and cultural ethos of contemporary Qatar, often reinforce the connection between women and the domestic sphere and have the capacity to steer women away from public participation.

In addition to enculturation, the interviews portrayed the agency that many Qatari women have established within their evolving parameters. One recurring trope in these ethnographic interviews concerned the everyday normalcy of these challenges—for many women, the prohibitions and challenges were simply “the way things are.” Notably, although many participants described experiences, lifeways, and choices that were exceptional or against the grain of customary norms, these breaks with the perceived contours of tradition were rarely voiced as a form of social rebellion. Indeed, the friction between individual women's choices and gendered Qatari customary norms was infrequently noted as such by the respondents. This can be interpreted as evidence that Qatari women are unaware of or disengaged from the sociopolitical challenges they face in their lives. More likely, however, is that these challenges and exceptions are part of the pedestrian lives of contemporary Qatari women.

Underpinning women's slow but steady progress into the public sphere and the forces that challenge this progress is the ongoing enhancement of the nuclear family in Qatari society. With the growing economic and social importance of the nuclear family in Qatar and throughout the GCC region, the well-spring of discriminatory gendered customary norms has been significantly altered. Although Qataris—women and men—know the terrain of these customary norms and their gendered implications, the variations recollected and practiced by the women and their families in this ethnographic study revealed a diversity grounded in the nuclear family. Whereas perceptions of Qatari traditions and customary norms are being increasingly codified by heritage projects, the diversity of real gendered practices is percolating through the individuation of the nuclear family, which is the predominant and functional socioeconomic unit in contemporary GCC region. Encouraging these practices would provide women with more options and viable choices and more social support in the enhancement of their roles in public life.

## Appendix I

### *Interview Guide, Semi-structured Ethnographic Interview*

#### **Directions:**

The interviewer must be fluent in interview techniques and seek to prepare the interviewee to express his personal opinion about the issues he is asked about, talking about his personal experience with the issues. We note that the interview form does not contain questions, but rather contains a set of general issues that are discussed through the conversation with the respondent, and the researcher has the responsibility to ensure that all the issues and data contained in the form have been collected accurately and in-depth. Bearing in mind that we try to get our respondents to tell us detailed facts, the interviewer can often use these types of statements to encourage the detailing by respondents:

- Tell me more about..
- What do you mean by..
- Explain to me what happened when...
- Why do you think so?
- Can you give me an example from your experience?

#### **Basic information:**

1. Age
2. Place of birth
3. Interview date
4. Address/Location
5. Educational level
6. Marital status (married—divorced—widow—single)
7. Number of children, if any
8. Professional status
9. Tribal affiliation, if any
10. Residential area

#### **Descriptive categories: Write descriptions of the conditions of the respondents after the interview.**

1. Describe their health status
2. Describe their living situation
3. Describe their economic situation
4. Description of the respondents' origin (Bedouin—urban)
5. Description of their family situation (stability—problems—divorce—alimony)
6. Describe their physical condition
7. Description of their appearance and dress
8. Description of their attitude during the interview

9. Describe their employment status (working—  
not working)
10. Describe their occupation type
11. Number of working years

For each category of questions below, all questions will focus on extracting personal stories and experiences.

#### First: the birth of the respondent

1. Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_
2. Place of birth: home—hospital \_\_\_\_\_
3. What name was given at birth? Who chose the name? Was the respondent named after someone?
4. Was the father present. (Absent—distant—traveler—dead—other)
5. The men and women's feelings and reactions to your birth
6. Diseases, breastfeeding, vaccinations
7. Celebrating his birthday/gender discrimination in the celebration
8. Discrimination (between the sexes) in dress—value and level
9. Discrimination in treatment:
  - i. In inheritance
  - ii. In nursing
  - iii. In education
10. Is there awareness and interest in genetic diseases resulting from consanguineous marriage?

#### Second: Youth and adolescence

1. Distinguish between girls and boys in the following matters: education, finance, surname/name, games and entertainment, gifts, and clothing
2. Who listens more to the words and opinions from the parents, girls or boys?
3. Father's relationship:
  - i. With kids
  - ii. With the mother. The relationship can be described as follows:
    - a-Partnership
    - b-Love and respect
    - c-Disrespect and unhappiness
4. How do girls behave when men enter the house?
  - i. Hijab immediately
  - ii. Wear abaya
  - iii. Hide in another room
5. How do the girls appear in the presence of the father and other male family members, such as the husband?
6. Methods of reprimand:
  - i. For boys
  - ii. For girls
  - iii. Is there a difference?
  - iv. When reprimanded by the father
  - v. When reprimanded by the mother

7. Relationship with siblings:
  - i. How do younger and older siblings behave with girls in the family?
8. Responsibilities of the eldest daughter in the family:
  - i. Help raise siblings
  - ii. Child rearing
  - iii. Home duties
  - iv. Participate in home finances if she works
9. What is prohibited for girls and permitted for boys, and vice versa?
10. Duties and chores girls, but not boys, are responsible for

#### Third: Marriage

1. How did the mother deal with her daughter during first experience of her menstrual cycle?
2. What was the treatment of the daughter during this period of maturity by the mother, father, and other family members?
3. What are the new responsibilities assigned to the daughter at this point of maturity?
4. Engagement and marriage: does the daughter have the freedom to choose the husband, is there a consultation, and who chose the husband in the end?
5. The husband's relationship with the family: with relatives, with another tribe, with neighbors, and with people from another country
6. Have you encountered a problem when choosing a spouse?
7. Marriage ceremony and age at marriage (before or after maturity—what is the appropriate age?)
8. The role of the bride and mother of the bride—reactions of other family members
9. Explanation about the arranged marriage details made by the mother to her daughter
10. *Mehr*:
  - d.Contains?
  - e.Value?
  - f.Who paid?
  - g.Does she have control over her dowry and who received it? Did she benefit from it?
  - h.What is the role of the bride's family in preparing for the wedding?
  - i.What is the role of the groom's family in preparing for the wedding?

- j. What is the role of the bride in preparing for the wedding?
- 11. The name/surname that the father gives to his wife (the mother of so-and-so, the name of the first-born male/female)
- 12. Changes in the position of women due to marriage?

#### Fourth: The educational situation

1. Education priority (girls vs. boys)
2. The length of the education period (girls vs. boys)
3. Choosing the specialty: who chose it?
4. The right to choose career focus: who chose it?
5. Do you control the financial responsibility/salary (before marriage vs. after marriage)?
6. Continuing education after marriage: have you encountered opposition?
7. Are women encouraged to seek continuing education?
8. What are the benefits of learning and the disadvantages of not?
9. Did the work and her salary contribute to improving her situation within the family and her participation in the decisions/independence?

#### Fifth: Social status—family, tribe, and extended family

1. The authority in the home (the man or the woman)? Give examples.
2. The mother's contribution to making decisions within the family regarding the following:
  - a. The engagement
  - b. The way of making decisions
  - c. Counseling
- A. The mother's role in the marriage of her children at present
- B. The current role of the sister in the marriage of her brothers
- C. What is its role in the marriage of children and siblings?
  - d. Divorce and the authority of the husband's mother
- D. Visits outside of the home: who controls them?
  - a. Personal choice
  - b. The husband
  - c. The men in the family
3. Power within the family: is it allowed for women or not?
4. The right of women to make decisions, even if indirectly? How does that happen?
5. Raising their voice during family gatherings
6. The role/ability of a woman in receiving a man as a guest in the absence of her husband?

7. Women's right to the following:
  - i. Visiting girlfriends
  - ii. Traveling alone or with friends

#### Sixth: Economics

1. The economic role of women in the family: spending, no spending, or participate in spending?
2. Methods of distributing family wealth?
3. The right of women to manage their financial affairs, such as the following:
  - i - The right to sell, buy, and/or rent real estate
  - ii- Carrying out commercial transactions, participating in negotiations with strangers/others
4. A woman's right to do business: can, encouraged, or prohibited?
5. Her opinion on the topic: agree or disagree?
6. Do family businesses have a role in them? Her opinion?
7. The ways and means of earning income that women depend on?
8. What are the economic activities that prevent women from participate in earning of income (give examples)?
9. What are the economic activities that women are encouraged to practice (give examples)?
10. The income-driven activities that serve the needs of the family and society, and can women participate.

#### Seventh: The religious situation

1. A marriage certificate: can women apply for a marriage certificate?
2. A certificate in sales/economic Transactions: did the women practice it?
3. A woman's right to ask for marriage. Her opinion on that?
4. A woman's right to ask for a divorce. Her opinion on that?
5. Appearing in front her husband, brother, or children without a veil (niqab)
6. The period of isolation for widows (the waiting period): arrangements – prohibitions. Her opinion on that?
7. Ability to leave the house or travel without the permission of the husband or a legally acceptable guardian. Her opinion on that?
8. What questions are considered taboo?
9. Entertainment: a woman's right to host a party or participate in a public party. What is her opinion about that?



**Eighth: Women's participation in public life**

1. What are her favorite hobbies: poetry, drawing, playing music, singing, horse riding, swimming, etc.?
2. Is she encouraged to practice her hobby, and by whom?
3. Participation in the political field:
  - A. Consulting women in public affairs (family disputes, quarrels related to marriage, divorce, public problems): what is her opinion about that and did she participate?
  - B. Does she have the desire to participate in political life? In what areas?
  - C. Did she participate in the municipal council elections? Did anyone influence her choice of candidate?
  - D. From her point of view, are women suitable for political work?
  - E. Does she agree that she personally has a role in politics? If yes, why?
  - F. Does she refuse? Why or why not?
  - G. Are women less capable than men in the political field or equal to them? What are her reasons for thinking that way?
  - H. Are women less able than men to take leadership positions in the country or equal to them? What are the reasons for thinking that way?
4. Participation in civil society institutions: is she a volunteer with a charitable organization? What kind of activities does she participate in?
5. If she does not participate, what are the reasons? Was it forbidden by a family member or customs and traditions?
6. Do you support women's participation in public life, such as volunteer work and mass rallies?
7. Do you want to see women's participation in political life to further develop or do you object? What are the reasons?

**Ninth: The role of women in literature, poetry, and storytelling**

1. Can a woman recite poetry in public? Do you agree? If you disagree, what are the reasons?
2. Why do Qatari women use a pseudonym when publishing their poems?
3. Can a woman personally compose, present, and express her skill if given the opportunity?
4. Do women encounter problems that prevent them from doing this, and if so, from whom?

5. Do you play a role in presenting popular culture pieces, especially popular stories and novels, to children?
6. What popular proverbs do you usually repeat?
7. Do you think that the role of women in cultural life needs to be developed? Is it good, or do you mind women having a role?

**Tenth: The role of women in the media**

1. Do women face problems when appearing in the media? The reasons?
2. Do you personally agree with women appearing in the media, if necessary?
3. Do you support the appearance of women in the media?

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