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Title: Neo-Gender Balancing in Saudi Arabia Divorce under Social Exchange Theory

Abstract:

The recent and unprecedented reforms introduced by the Saudi government have touched and changed many aspects of the Saudi society. Among the new and open-minded policies that have so affected life for Saudi women and granted them rights they have long been deprived of such are the freedom to drive and the ability to travel without a close relative male guardian. The guardian authority no longer exists in the kingdom, which gives women more power to choose. Also, family law related to financial affairs and custody have been changed in favour women by making them equal to men. The new laws have truly empowered Saudi women and have given them a wider access to the job market. The major premise of this proposal is that such changes in the gender power balance predictably and understandably impact the formation of the Saudi family. With the new social system, Saudi women have more power in the equation; and are no longer totally depended on her husband. They can leave the relationship if they do not feel satisfied. Thus, it is not surprising to see an increase in divorce rates to be 168 cases per day in 2022. In this paper, Richard Emerson's social exchange theory, will be used to analyse the balancing in the exchange relations between men and women in Saudi Arabia. Based on Emerson, an exchange relation is balanced if both parties are equally dependent on each other for exchange (or resources of value). If they are equally dependent, they have equal power. The central idea that power is based on dependence allows for the specification of ways in which dependencies are altered, so that they affect the balance of power in the exchange relation and in networks of exchange relations. Studying the balancing of the relationship extends the financial and social fact to analyse the role of social media in forming gender rules in Saudi Arabia.

Bio:

Dr. Abdullah F. Alrebh is Associate Professor in Sociology of Religion and Sociological Theory at Grand Valley State University. His research focuses on politics, culture, religion, and authority of Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf, and Islam. He earned a Ph.D. from Michigan State University, East Lansing. During 2015, Dr. Alrebh served as a Visiting Scholar at Michigan State University. He has published a number of articles (peer-reviewed and think tank) spanning several issues pertaining to religious, authority, and education with a primary focusing on Middle Eastern countries in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular. His upcoming book is titled, Saudi Arabia in the Anglo-American Press Covering the Kingdom during the 20th Century. He is the Editor of the Michigan Sociological Review.

Bio:

Radhi H. Al-Mabuk is a professor of education in the Department of Educational Psychology & Foundations at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, a position he has held since 1990. Al-Mabuk received his Ph.D in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and his M.S. in Community Counseling from Winona State University, and B.A. in Social Studies Education from St. Mary's University. His areas of expertise include child and adolescent development, human motivation, moral development, and instructional psychology. Dr. Al-Mabuk's current research interests are threefold: comparative education; academic transitions; and psychology of forgiveness and revenge.
