

## Towards Anchoring the Concept of the Vitality of Socio-cultural Beliefs and Practices: Example of Lebanese Novels

### Theme(s):

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- Information, Education, and Communication

### Type of Program:

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- Raising Awareness (research)

### Country/Region:

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- Lebanon (national)

### Author:

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### Human Resources:

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- Researcher

**Initiative overview:** The study deals with the manner in which contemporary literature by male and female writers is influenced by and influences gender in Lebanon. The study focuses on the social transformations that took place during the civil war between 1975 and 1990, especially during the last 20 years. This period was characterised by terrible political conflict, thus imposing a specific social reality and unbalanced power relations between men and women. One can argue that, on the whole, change to achieve equity for women in Lebanon occurred in two fields, primarily in legislation and politics, and to a lesser extent in society.

**Social discriminatory practices targeted:** Hidden discriminatory practices such as men's control of women's movement usually lead to unbalanced power relations that are tense and change-resistant. Women have been repressed emotionally and sexually through a conservative culture and traditional views against individual freedoms and expression at the level of affective relations. (There is no difference between the concepts of love and marriage, and body and affection.)

**Socio-cultural context:** In Lebanon, there are different social discriminatory practices. At the personal level, discriminatory forms clearly emerge in women's rights in relation to marriage, nationality rights for their children, abortion and protection from gender-based physical violence.

At the public level, discriminatory forms are reflected in decreasing private sector salaries, practices barring women from leading administrative positions and educational inequity.

There are no diverse economic activities for women and no mechanisms to monitor the implementation of policies, constitutions and legislation that support equality. The budgets lack special funds for women's empowerment programmes, thus allowing for the development of double standards in implementing and interpreting laws. The last twenty years have brought about many changes. An increase in the number of women's associations interested in women's citizenship rights was recorded. Many men, especially in urban areas, have adopted gender equality attitudes, particularly in social relations, and have voiced their openness.

## Good Practices

### Innovative Approach

- Comparing and analysing the relations between the sexes in contemporary Lebanese literature, which describes what takes place in society in different forms, is considered an important means to analyse the most neglected factors in this area.
- This is an innovative approach since it determines and shows what has been achieved in actual fact and compares theory to practice.

### Overcoming Challenges

- The most important challenge was to balance out two different types of analyses: analysing the cultural/social/political discourse and laws, and literary views about the same issues.
- Another challenge was how to link discussions of gender issues, social relations and the factors impacting on equality between the sexes in literature.

### Overcoming Challenges

- The study has clarified the existing models of social relations for men and women in contemporary literature in an attempt to define the sources of various discriminatory forms of gender relations.
- The study results can be used in monitoring and planning interventions to address discriminatory social practices.
- The study dealt in-depth with some existing practices and put them in context in order to carry out more scientific and proof-based analyses.

## Lessons for Replication

- The study can be easily replicated in other contexts. It shows how the area of comparative and descriptive gender studies can be expanded.
- The study highlights the importance of using the extracted data both to put gender issues in the appropriate context and understanding, and to prepare the basic information necessary to intervene and treat gender discrimination.
- Literature can be used as an innovative means of measuring the degree of awareness of gender equity issues among researchers, decision makers and the local community.