



## Sociological Briefing

# Voices of Syrian mothers and the impact of war

The analysis of war includes the gender perspective in research about violence against women and the challenging situations that women face not only during wars but also in postwar periods. The RC32 Women, Gender, and Society promotes the development of contributions concerning women's rights throughout the world, including the ones that are continually violated, with enormous impacts on women's freedom and equality. In the case of Syria, after 12 years since the beginning of the war, the situation of women and children living in dire conditions requires urgent analysis to provide solutions and raise awareness in the international community.

The authors of "[The impact of war followed by forced displacement on women and children: how Syrian mothers perceive their experiences](#)" published in the *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, focus on the case of Syria to explore the women's experiences and responses to war-related stressors and displacement. Through qualitative work, the findings contribute to improving the responses of social workers, humanitarian organizations, and other professionals working with Syrian families. The interdisciplinary approach supports the analysis, which is framed considering Reuben Hill's Family Stress Theory.

## Syrian situation and literature

The article introduces the role that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have in the conflict and the humanitarian support the UAE are providing to Syrians, for instance supporting family-based guest residence for displaced people. The refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey are hosting Syrians since 2011, currently around 250,000 as legal settlers according to the authors. In that context, the authors explain the existing literature about the impact of war and violent conflicts on emotional and behavioural disorders, post-traumatic stress symptoms, or limited educational achievement. One of the main topics highlighted by the authors is the Syrian women's experience and the direct impact that displacement has on their emotional well-being, including the concerns about their children, many times exposed to violence and abuse.

The introduction to the literature is complemented by contributions showing the relevance of supporting individuals, families, and communities to act as protective actors in war contexts. In this vein, Reuben Hill's Family Stress Theory frames the research work because of its potential for social work practice, including the understanding of how Syrian families are facing the responses to the war situation and its effects. The final aim is to explore the "effects

of war, followed by displacement to the UAE, on mothers and their children” by including the voices of Syrian mothers.

### Including the voices of Syrian mothers

The results are based on 19 interviews with Syrian mothers, with ages between 31 and 52 years old. They have different family realities although most of the women are in UEA with their husbands, with children under the age of 18. Concerning the educational level, 12 mothers have secondary schooling, 6 BA and 1 a Diploma; 14 are housewives, 3 teachers, 1 secretary, and 1 tailor. Moreover, the work includes a case study of Noor, a pseudonym referring to a 48-year-old mother and a grandmother. The case of Noor is explained in detail to exemplify the reality influencing many displaced Syrian women, their family relations, and health issues, among others.

The results showing the effects of war on Syrian women are divided into different aspects, which are: the loss of “home”, the fear of not being able to return to Syria, the emotional pain of separation from the ones who remained in Syria or in other countries, the pressure of “configuring” the family survives, the lack of financial resources, the financial losses linked

to the loss of professional identity, and the challenges of the identity as a mother. Concerning the effects of war on children, the results show the impact of sound explosions and gunshots on children’s physical and mental health, the loss of appetite or weight loss, the feelings of fear, the displayed socially inappropriate behavior, distressing memories, depression, and insomnia, involuntary urination resulting from trauma, difficulty in adapting to school, absenteeism, refusal to attend and poor results. Furthermore, the case study demonstrates the existence of core stressors events affecting women, such as the loss of family members and loss of home, causing traumatic memories.

The implications for the practice are described by the authors, showing the existing synergies with the Family Stress Theory and the need for supporting families to guarantee human rights in displaced communities, overcoming “hopelessness” through a human approach focus. This contribution is a clear example of how a journal with a sociological focus such as the *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* can include contributions in social work that can create and consolidate synergies across disciplines.