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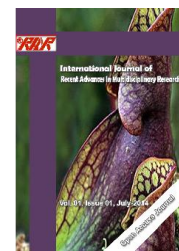
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## Full Length Research Article

# ATTITUDES TOWARD MUSLIM LEBANESE WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS RESURGENCE: A STUDY OF 284 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

The politicization of religion in the last few decades has created a climate ripe for religious resurgence in all areas of the world. The decreased role of religion among societies and effective secularization and modernization of the West have directly influence opposing factors of “religious resurgence”, “religious fundamentalism”, and “religious revivalism” as a sense of cultural preservation and balancing new social, economic, emotional and interlectual side effects of modernization growth (Sahliyah, 1990). The effects of religious resurgence on Muslim Lebanese women’s efforts to enhance their freedom, equity, and civil rights need to be explored thoroughly to provide an adequate analysis of the current needs of women living under religious verdicts. A survey of 284 Lebanese university student subjects, between the ages of 18-35, regarding attitudes toward women during religious resurgence was conducted over a period of five years. From the 284 subjects in this study, 124 women also reported self-assessment levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. The authors delineate the interconnectedness among Lebanese women’s religiosity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction levels. Relationships among attitudes toward women, the number of laws enacted to support women’s rights and equality, and religious resurgence are also assessed. The results of this study suggest that religious resurgence tends to reinforce a bias against women from both secular and religious authorities. Thus, Muslim Lebanese women are vulnerable from within this framework and likely to continue to face major challenges in efforts to enhance their freedom, equity, and civil rights.

## INTRODUCTION

Religious resurgence is one of theocracy’s developmental stages. According to, (Kaplan *et al.*, 1996). “Religious resurgence” is a form of religious zealotry by which self-styled “true-believers” endeavor to establish religious identity, revive the religious community, and institute alternatives to secular society. Such a religious resurgence occurred in Lebanon during the long civil war from 1975 to 1991. As an indicator of an emerging theocracy, religious resurgence is also an indicator of the demise of women’s freedom, liberty, and equitable job opportunities, and the demise of democracy as well. This is possible because negative legislation enacted during such resurgence, as well as the attitudes, myths, misperceptions, and stereotypes held about women, even by women, have led to the formulation and implementation of public policies designed to hinder women’s human and civil rights, and eventually a nation’s democracy (e.g., Afghanistan, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen). There are forty anti-government,

low-intensity conflicts documented and afflicting contemporary international quasi-democracies. Thirty four of these entities were founded because of Islamic religious resurgence, (Appleby *et al.*, 2000). This study focused on the effects of religion on the perception of women’s freedom and human rights in Lebanon. This research is urgently needed to elucidate the rights of women in Lebanon in the current political climate, their adjustment to this religious resurgence and progress within the current societal, not only in Lebanon but also in all developing societies. Muslim Lebanese women were selected to be recruited for participation in this research study for several reasons. Lebanon provides a unique political environment that permits the isolation of the effects of Islamic religious oppression on women.

Muslim Lebanese women’s personal freedom and civil rights are not governed by national or local laws but by religious mandates as interpreted by individual sectarian rule, which involves “personal status codes” derived from Islamic law. Each of Lebanon’s 18 official sects (Salamay *et al.*, 2009), possess a distinct personal status code that governs the domestic and personal affairs of women. “Status Codes” are

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derived from *ijtihad*, religious interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah, by male scholars and constitute *aposteriori* knowledge through patriarchal interpretations of religious text, (Tabet *et al.*, 2005). Although some Islamic groups resist Western influences and rely on pure Sharia interpretation of women's rights, the sects continue to be immersed in the Western subculture and thus share many universal attributes amenable to cross-cultural comparative analysis.

Religious resurgence within the Middle and Near East has converged democracies and constitutional monarchies with religious identities. This resurgence has several common and unifying goals across countries, primarily to expel the "sweet lethal poison" of "Westoxification", (Kramer Kramer *et al.*, 1991). Politically, the Middle and Near Eastern states range from "theocratic monarchism" (e.g., Saudi Arabia) to "radical Islamist governments" (Iran and Libya), and "authoritarian privatizing states" (Turkey, Tunisia, and Egypt). However, because of the religious nature of this resurgence and interconnectedness of the "Umma", all can be labeled as "theocracies", (Hirschl, 2009). Theocracy is a form of civil government in which "God" (Allah) is recognized as the sole authority over state affairs. Theocracy is the sole concept of "state" and the only recognized authority in Islamic Sharia, which derives laws solely from the Quran and Hadith, (Lombardi, 2013). However, *ijtihad* is also an Islamic concept derived from the Quran, which involves reinterpretation of Islamic laws by Muslim scholars and jurists through personal thought and reflection, and may lead the way to providing a way forward in changing the "Status Codes" for women in territories that are primarily Muslim. (Harasani *et al.*, 2013),

In addition to theocracy, Lebanese women have to overcome the nation's official "confessional" political system, (Dedeyan, 2005). In this system, public offices are assigned according to religious group. For example, according to Makdisi (2005), the nation's president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the house must be a Shi'a Muslim. Parliament must be divided equally between Christians and Muslims. However, because of stipulations from Sharia Law, the overwhelming majority of government officials are men. Therefore, we postulate that the synergistic effects of religious resurgence and theocracy restrict women's movements for freedom and equality and are obstacles to their development (Backer *et al.*, 2008). "Segregation" and "separation" provide a central theme underlying the oppression of Lebanese women. According to the ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the separate but equal doctrine that governed U.S. social policies from 1896 to 1954 was inherently oppressive. Separate was by definition "unequal" and was inconsistent with the concept of equality before the law established by the American Constitution. (Price, 2001), Similar theocratic rules currently segregate women from men in a Muslim society that adheres to strict Shari'a Law interpretation for social, political, and personal realms of life.

This type of religious interpretation of gender segregation provides fertile ground for "separation" leading to "oppression", when the separation implies that one party is unable to participate in law making, judicial decisions, and implementation of the laws that are enforced. One of the physical methods of "segregation" leading to "oppression" as

interpreted by Western philosophy is the idea of women and the "head covering" ("hijab") and "face covering" ("veil" or "niqab"). For women living in Islamic society, *hijab* is a mandatory requirement for female believers according to *Quran* and *niqabis* recommended by the *Sunnah* (Prophet Muhammed's teachings). The question remains, "Is a woman who wears *hijab* or *niqab* because of religious requirement, "oppressed" or "subjugated" by Sharia Laws or is *hijab* a personal right and freedom that should be left unmanaged by unattached Western feminists who pose as "saviors of the oppressed?" (Danchin *et al.*, 2012). "Perhaps the answer to that question lies in *pluralisms* that may not simplify the legalities based upon the cloth itself, but in the intention of the woman behind the *hijab* or *niqab*. Was the *hijab* or *niqaba* choice given to women as part of their unique personal belief system? Are women free to choose to wear or not wear the *hijab* or *niqab*? Or is the decision of a woman left to male elites, created as a legal requirement (legal requirement to veil or to unveil in order to participate in society) aimed at discrediting her choice of clothing? Research suggests many Muslim women choose to veil to preserve their gender difference and identification, others utilize it as a religious or cultural statement. (Greene, 2013), Dichotomous oppressions ensue in plural societies, one that embraces the "veil" as a mandatory religious requirement that omits women from intellectual contribution and the other that forbids a woman wear the "veil" as part of an oppressive punishment for religious belief.

Neither rule considers the individual preferences of the woman for whom such a law is rendered justice within a particular culture or society. The answer is not yet clear how a country as diverse as Lebanon would react to such religious rule. However, if the primary intent behind legally requiring "veiling or unveiling" is forced and created for the purpose of "separation of women from any part of society", then inequality is the underlying outcome for women who live under such a regime. Forced separation based on gender is inherently oppressive (Allen *et al.*, 2008). However, by not providing a choice to women, to veil or not to veil, women are subjugated under parallel rule that sexually objectifies women by demanding exposure of her body, thus rendering the woman powerless over her own body (Szymanski, 2011). There is a lack of research addressing Lebanon's religious resurgence and its impact on citizens' movements, which requires a review of issues relevant to women's rights and religious resurgence, including: (1) What is the status of women in Lebanon and the Middle East? (2) Why is it important to understand the status of women in Lebanon and the Middle East? (3) What are the implications of this study for social policy, social work intervention, social research, and social work education?

### **What is the status of women in Lebanon and the Middle East?**

Until recently, the status of women, specifically their identity and life circumstances, has traditionally been defined worldwide in relation to their families, not to the market or the community. (Kay, 2000), However, Lebanese women's struggle for political independence and socioeconomic equality has been divorced from family law reforms and from laws concerning employment discrimination, (Shehadeh, 1998). The contemporary legal shift in the status of married women in Lebanon is regressing. Women are being forced back into the

sole confinement of the private sphere of family lives, away from the public arena of community, regional, and national affairs that Lebanon's pre-religious resurgence had provided, and where women found a progressive, promising, and nurturing milieu, (Herzberg, 2013).

The milestones along this momentous path back in time mark the extent that Lebanese women were able to acquire the essential preconditions for social, economic, and political independence including education, employment, and equity in the labor market. In 2000, even though 50% of the country's population was women, less than 23% of them were employed, whereas 31% were employed in 1980. In 2000, the average salary of men was 27% to as much as 85% higher than that of women, compared to less than 47% higher in 1980. In 2000 the illiteracy rate among females age 10 and older was reported to be 16%, compared to 2.7% among males. (Lebanese women situation in numbers, 2000), A 2003 study reported that in 2000, 20% of women over age 15 were illiterate compared to 8% of men over the same age. (Roudi-Fahimi, 2003), A more recent report by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 2006) notes that in general illiteracy is in decline, but a gap remains between men (5.6%) and women (10%). However, about 27% of poor women and 76% of extremely poor women do not attend school beyond the sixth standard grade and only 14% of all women in Lebanon reach the university level. (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2006),

These statistics are affirmed in the UNDP's 2000 Human Development Report (HDR), in which Lebanon was ranked 101 out of a total of 175 countries, with a human development index (HDI) of 0.757. The 2000 HDR report blamed Lebanon's low ranking on its ethno-religious civil war, violence, and instability, (United Nations, 2009). However, if we consider the religious resurgence period that began in the last several years, it would be appropriate to further examine religious resurgence as a possible facilitator of the low HDR ranking. The decrease in Lebanon's HDI during its religious resurgence is paralleled by a decrease in the UNDP standard of living for females, but not for males. In 2000 Lebanese women's UNDP standard of living index was 63 and that of men was 74 compared to the UNDP index for 1984, where it was reported at 68 for women and 71 for men.

In 2012, the female labor force participation was reported at 22.6% for females and 70.8% for males. (UNDP Human Development Report, 2013), This is a considerable regression in the standard of living for women and a widening of the gap between women and men (from 3 index points to 11 index points) during a time in which both men and women experienced the same environmental conditions of civil unrest, violence, and religious resurgence. Of the 38 countries, including Lebanon, ranked lower in 2000 than in 1984, 35 were Muslim Middle-Eastern countries undergoing religious resurgence. (United Nations Development Programme, 2000), According to UNDP annual HDR reports from 1984 to 2000, 88 women out of 100 were receiving health care during pregnancy in the year 2000, whereas 89 women out of 100 received such health care in 1982. In 2000, 47% of Lebanese women used modern contraceptive measures, whereas in 1984 more than 52% did. Only two Lebanese women were

parliamentarians in 2000, whereas three occupied such seats in 1982. Two women were director generals in 1998, whereas five women held such a position in 1984. Two women were appointed ambassadors in 1994, while three ascended to this rank in 1980. To date, no Lebanese women have ever held ministerial or head of municipality positions. From 2000 to 2012, although HDI improved slightly for the entire population, women continue to fall behind with respect to maternal health, empowerment, and economic activity. (UNDP Human Development Report, 2013), Most demonstrative of the effects of religious resurgence on women's education, equity, and employability in Lebanon are data from the UNDP Statistics Division. These data show that Lebanese women in professional associations have had one of the lowest increases in membership since 1990 (UNDP 1984–2000). (United Nations, 2009), Most of the nations that have received such regressive evaluations for the same period are Middle Eastern Muslim countries undergoing religious resurgence (Syria, Libya, and Egypt). The cultural and gender privy constraints of religious resurgence are unavoidably coupled with common, universal socioeconomic and political impediments that contemporary women must overcome in order to regain equity, equality, and freedom.

Equally important, this study found strong statistical relationships between the number of conservative religious parliamentarians and the number of laws enacted to support women's rights. Before Lebanon's religious resurgence, no representative of a religious organization ever held any of Lebanon's 128 parliamentary seats. Between 1990 and 2000, 12 parliamentarians representing Amal and Hezbollah were elected and re-elected in the four Lebanese parliamentary elections, as well as 19 representatives of conservative Christian-based coalitions. (Schbley, 2002), Ninety-five percent of this study's respondents who indicated an affiliation with a religious organization and voted compared to an average of 71.3% of eligible voters in the Muslim enclaves of Baalbek, Bekaa, Hermil, Nabatieh, and South-Lebanon. The total national voting average is below 41%, (Lebanese women situation in numbers, 2000). This finding is significant because it shows the perception of political freedom for voters from a very conservative religious affiliation and those from a non-religious sectors. Since the mobilization of the first Lebanese women's movement in 1953, until Lebanon's religious resurgence in the 1990s, its parliament had enacted seven laws granting women limited freedom, equality, and equity rights.

During this same period, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Algiers, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Tunis, and Libya each passed fewer than seven laws designed to empower women with additional civil rights and freedom (UNDP, 1984–2000). Therefore, except for reforms in Israel Lebanon's pre-1990 reforms of women's civil rights were ahead of all other Middle Eastern nations. However, from 1990 to 1995, only three laws were passed in Lebanon designed to empower women with additional civil rights and freedom (Table 1), whereas, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Morocco, Algiers, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Tunis, and Libya have each passed five or more laws designed to empower women with additional civil rights and freedom (UNDP, 1984–2000).

Table 1. List of Enacted Laws Addressing Women's Issues

| Before 1990 (Year & Description)  | After 1990 (Year & Description)   |
|---|---|
| 1952 -- Women acquire the right to vote.  | 1993 -- A female witness becomes equal to a male witness in real estate transactions.   |
| 1960 -- A Lebanese woman married to a foreigner acquires the right to retain her Lebanese citizenship if she so chooses.  | 1994 -- Women acquire the right to engage in commerce without their husband's authorization. A woman in the Lebanese diplomatic corps who marries a foreigner is no longer required to quit her position or transfer back to Lebanon. |
| 1974 -- Women no longer require their husbands' written permission to obtain a Lebanese passport.   | 1995 -- Women acquire the right to take on a life insurance policy without their husband's authorization.   |
| 1984 -- The use of contraceptives becomes legal through a legislative decree by the executive branch. Abortion is still illegal under Lebanese law.                 |   |
| 1986 -- Lebanon ratifies the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with reservations pertaining to nationality transfer and family laws. |   |
| 1987 -- The retirement age (64) becomes equal for both women and men. Before that, it was 60 for men and 55 for women.  |   |
| 1988-- Lebanon ratifies the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, with reservations pertaining to Employment, Civil, and Human Rights.           |   |

### Importance of understanding the status of women in Lebanon

Although the social and ethno-religious climates in the United States are distinguishable from those in Lebanon and the Middle East, the impact of religiosity levels on women's civil rights movements, equity, and freedom may be the same. This research attempts to contribute to the study of patterns and processes of societal changes and the impact of religiosity levels on women's civil rights movements across cultures and nations. This study attempted to denote the outcomes of religious restraints on women's movement, freedom of speech, civil and human rights, and equality regardless of boundaries, cultures, religions, languages, or races. By illustrating the extent of ethno-religious constraints on women, it provides an impetus for American, Lebanese, and international feminist movements to preempt future legislation, political action, or movements that seek to curtail women's freedom in the name of religion.

### What are the implications for national and international social work practice?

Social work research is about delineating the interplay of power and empowerment not only among races and socioeconomic classes, but also between genders and among religions and cultures. This study is an attempt to address the lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between religious resurgence and women's movements. Furthermore, this study will address basic knowledge for international workers as they work with Muslim populations in various healthcare, political, and economical situations. In addition, this study will attempt to add to the cumulative knowledge about Middle Eastern cultural exegesis and women's educational and socioeconomic situations. Future clinical application of this study should assist international health and social workers with the design of treatment plans targeted at clients' oppression and abuse within the context of religious resurgence within the Middle East, particularly Lebanon. Finally, this study aims to assist in assisting preventive measures for future clients and to empower social work practitioners to anticipate future impediments to their clients' liberty, freedom, and equity. The implications of this study extend beyond clinical walls into the streets, families, homes, and businesses of our global village. Illuminating the effects of religious resurgence on women's freedom and human rights is crucial for women's physical and psychosocial adjustment, and for progress in developing societies.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the Islamic cultural perspectives of the women in this study to further develop a culturally sensitive plan for inherent and autonomous change.

### STUDY PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The overall hypothesis of this study is that religious resurgence and the level of religious fundamentalism in Lebanon will indirectly correlate to the strength and the likelihood of women's civil rights and equity movements. The attitude of Lebanese women and their movements for civil rights and equity will depend directly upon the level of their religiosity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. The following research questions are extensions of the primary hypothesis:

1. Will the difference between the means of women's responses/scores on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale. (Spence, 1997), increase as the number of conservative religious parliamentarians in Lebanon increases, and will the number of public entities that represent gender equality relative to regional and international development decrease?
2. Which group of Lebanese women has higher self-esteem scores? Groups are categorized according to the AWS as (1) zealots, (2) those with a strong association with religious resurgence, (3) those with a tempered association with religious resurgence, and (4) those with a weak association with religious resurgence.
3. What is the strength of relationship between Lebanese women's religiosity levels (Zealot, Strong Association, Tempered Association, Weak Association) and their current perception of life satisfaction (very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied)?

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the effort to delineate some of the effects of religious resurgence on women's freedom and civil rights, the statistical significance of the study's three hypotheses were tested. The significance level  $\alpha$  was set at 0.05. Both parametric and nonparametric correlations were applied for analyses.

### Statistical Analyses, Significance, and Post Hoc Tests

**H<sub>10</sub>:** There is no relationship between the means of genders' response/scores on the AWS, the number of conservative religious parliamentarians, the number of public entities that are forbidden by sharia (dance halls, cabarets) and the number

of laws enacted to support women's rights in Lebanon. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by a post-hoc Bonferroni analysis, allowed this research to analyze mean differences between gender scores on the AWS, the number of conservative religious parliamentarians, and the number of laws enacted to support women's rights in Lebanon.

**H<sub>20</sub>:** There is no relationship between Lebanese women's religiosity levels and their self-esteem scores. The strength and direction of the relationships of these variables were determined by a Spearman rho correlation coefficient test.

**H<sub>30</sub>:** There is no relationship between Lebanese women's religiosity levels and their perception of life satisfaction. The strength and direction of the relationships of these variables were determined by a Spearman rho correlation coefficient.

### Speculative Assumptions

Interpretive analysis of this study's narrative inquiry and testing of its three hypotheses is limited by the following five speculative assumptions:

1. Lebanon's religious resurgence was not imposed by foreign forces.
2. Lebanon is an independent and sovereign democracy.
3. Lebanon's religious resurgence encompassed all of its 18 religious sects.
4. Lebanon's economy was stable before its religious resurgence.
5. Solutions to Lebanon's confessional inequities may be achieved through its secular/political entities.

### Research Instruments

To test this study's three hypotheses, self-report instruments for data collection assessing respondents' attitudes toward women, religiosity levels, self-esteem, and life satisfaction are needed. They were designed, formulated, and constructed to be implemented by this study.

### Attitudes Toward Women Scale Selection and Operationalization

For this research, we adapted Spence and Hahn's 15-item AWS scale, supplemented by five additional questions designed and formulated by the first author to reflect relevant contemporary equity and equality issues. One open-ended question was added to permit participants to formulate and express, in their own words, their thoughts about their own attitudes toward women and perceptions of changes in those attitudes toward women.

### Measures of Religiosity, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction Levels Questionnaire

The study of religious resurgence in Lebanon must assess the religiosity levels of Judeo-Christians and Muslims. However, a cursory review of the literature reveals that although several researchers have designed and/or implemented a religiosity scale, all are based on a belief in Judeo-Christian canons (e.g., Duke University Religion Index). To our knowledge, no scales have been developed to measure Muslim levels of religiosity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Thus, the first author formulated a cross-religion scale for evaluating Lebanese religiosity levels. In addition to assessing religiosity levels, this study's hypotheses called for measures of self-esteem and life

satisfaction. Hence, the outcomes of this research effort are a 30-item Religiosity Level Scale (RLS) modeled after O'Neill and Kenny's (1998) measure, a 10-item Self-Esteem Scale (SES) adapted from Rosenberg (1979), and a 10-item Life Satisfaction Scale in which seven of the items were adapted from Gilman and Huebner's (1997) study, (O'Neill, 1998). A Delphi panel of three women and women's studies experts assessed the face and content validity of this study's AWS and RLS scales. This panel was also asked to validate each of the supplemental items on the scales according to proportion, frequency, and number of criteria. Two of the three judges validated each question prior to its inclusion in the final versions of the questionnaires. The content validity of the SES scale is accepted due to its prior publication and adoption by the various researchers identified earlier.

### Coding of Answers to the Life Satisfaction Scale

The coding system for the outcomes of Sections III and IV of the Life Satisfaction Scale, which "assumes that although individuals possess unique self-concept contents, the overall structure of self-concept may be common across individuals," was adopted from Gordan et al. (1968). Analyses of participants' comments were thus reduced to simple tabulation of frequencies of codes or themes. The sum of this tabulation constituted a composite variable that identified a respondent's level of life satisfaction (Chatah *et al.*, 2008)

### Tests for Reliability

A computer-based statistical package for social science research programs (SPSS 19.0) was used to assess the reliability of this study's modified instruments. Tests of the internal consistency of the AWS and RLS scales were conducted on independent samples soon after their design. These self-report instruments were presented to 71 students in research methods classes at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas. The average Cronbach alpha for all the items on both questionnaires was .76, yielding a strong internal consistency for all four matrixes.

### Dissemination of Questionnaires

The AWS and RLS questionnaires were distributed to prospective subjects in the fall of 1999 and again in the early spring and summer of 2004 by the PI and co-investigator. During each time period, 142 participants voluntarily signed consent forms and returned questionnaires. Thus, a total of 284 individuals participated in the study. The participants were students at the American University in Beirut and the Lebanese American University. During each dissemination phase, questionnaires were given to prospective respondents with envelopes labeled with on-campus addresses. Hence, the attitudes of Lebanese university students toward Lebanese women provided this study with the point of reference for understanding the role of women in Lebanon before and during a period of religious insurgency. The two questionnaires were seeking to identify the relationships between respondents' levels of religiosity and their levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.

### Sample and Sampling Limitations

To address this study's three research questions, a large sample able to accommodate both statistical and practical (cost and

feasibility) considerations, as well as fluctuations in assumptions and lack of knowledge, was mandated. Thus, this study had to overcome issues of time, security, money, and other difficulties inherent in attempting to sample a heterogeneous post-civil-war population. To date, Lebanon remains divided along invisible militarized, sectarian, cultural, and socioeconomic boundaries. Most Lebanese homes have yet to be equipped with operational utilities and telephone lines. Most Lebanese do not speak English and donot receive mail service. Lebanon’s 15-year civil war and postwar occupation by foreign and factional forces, through which most rations and resources are distributed, have rendered its cognitive citizenry suspicious of all inquiries and distant from all unfamiliar faces.

Thus, to overcome these significant limitations, this study’s self-administered, self-report questionnaires were hand-delivered to English-speaking students between 18 and 29 years of age from middle- to upper-middle-class backgrounds who lived with family members, reported strong religious fellowship and political membership, and participated in some political and/or religious organization. Although the questionnaires were not randomly administered, they yielded vital data that were necessary and may be sufficient to test the study’s null hypotheses(Table 2).

**Table 2. Sample Composition and Demographics (N = 284)**

|  | Male (n = 91)  |  | Female (n = 193)  |   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
|  | 1999   | 2004   | 1999  | 2004  |
| Total                                  | 34   | 57   | 108   | 85  |
| Lebanese Citizen                       | 21   | 38   | 98  | 52  |
| Voted Before                           | 25   | 43   | 108   | 52  |
| Ever Been Employed                     | 0  | 0  | 5   | 7   |
| Married & Engaged                      | 3  | 12   | 31  | 38  |
| Household Annual Income Above \$60,000 | 29   | 34   | 98  | 79  |
| Sect/Religion                          | MI = 9<br>CP = 1<br>MS = 3<br>DR = 4<br>CC = 3<br>CM = 4<br>CO = 6<br>OT = 4 | MI = 14<br>CP = 3<br>MS = 12<br>DR = 5<br>CC = 5<br>CM = 6<br>CO = 6<br>OT = 6 | MI = 27<br>CP = 21<br>MS = 9<br>DR = 2<br>CC = 11<br>CM = 9<br>CO = 12<br>OT = 17 | MI = 18<br>CP = 6<br>MS = 14<br>DR = 5<br>CC = 9<br>CM = 10<br>CO = 11<br>OT = 12 |

**RESULTS**

A significant statistical relationship was found between an increase in the number of mosques and churches and a decrease in the number of laws for women (p<.01). Furthermore, decrease in the number of mixed public gathering entities was also found to be significantly reduced since the beginning of the period of religious resurgence (p<.01). Since Lebanon’s religious resurgence in the early 1990s, most of the residential, commercial, and tourist areas have witnessed an overwhelming decrease in the number of public entities that provide public meeting, entertainment, and social mixing. This study also found strong inverse statistical relationships between the number of conservative religious parliamentarians and the number of laws enacted to support women’s rights.Among the participants in the 1999 survey, the mean difference between respondents who expressed egalitarian attitudes toward women and those whoexpressed traditional attitudes toward women was .2717. The paired t-test yielded a significant difference between the two groups with p-value of .009 (Table 3).

**Table 3. Paired-Samples t Tests**

| Pair  | Paired Differences |         | t      | p-value (2-tailed) |
|---|--------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
|   | Mean               | SD      |        |                    |
| AWS Traditional vs. Egalitarian 1999 Cohorts        | .2717              | .92790  | 2.684  | .009               |
| AWS Traditional vs. Egalitarian 2004 Cohorts        | .4823              | 1.3204  | 7.1003 | .000               |
| Religious Membership vs. Level of Religiosity       | .5048              | 1.73488 | 2.667  | .005               |
| Religious Membership vs. Level of Self-Esteem       | .9643              | 1.75279 | 5.042  | .000               |
| Religious Membership vs. Level of Life Satisfaction | .9553              | 1.8969  | 5.298  | .000               |
| Levels of Religiosity vs. Self-Esteem               | -.4595             | .44201  | -9.528 | .000               |
| Levels of Religiosity vs. Life Satisfaction         | -.2738             | .73366  | -3.421 | .001               |

Among the 2004 participants, the mean difference between respondents who expressed egalitarian attitudes toward women and those who expressed traditional attitudes toward women was .4823. When the mean difference among the 2004 participants was compared to that of the 1999 participants, the outcomes from this comparison permitted us to infer that the difference in the traditional and egalitarian attitudes toward women increased significantly from 1999 to 2004. The independent two-sample t-tests comparing the mean scores between 1999 and 2004 are both significant at  $\alpha = .05$  in traditional and egalitarian groups, respectively (Table 4).

**Table 4. Independent Samples Tests (1999 versus 2004)**

|                 | t-test          |        |                    |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------|--------------------|
|                 | Mean Difference | t      | p-value (2-tailed) |
| AWS Traditional | .105            | 3.403  | .042               |
| AWS Egalitarian | 1.213           | 14.180 | .001               |

ANOVA and post-hoc Bonferroni analyses confirmed the significant difference between the means of respondents who expressed egalitarian attitudes and those who expressed traditional attitudes toward women regarding the number of conservative religious parliamentarians, the number of public entities for gender mixing, and the number of laws enacted to support women’s rights in Lebanon. These five mean differences were tightly clustered and highly significant, with p-values <.01 and test statistics F varying from 12.999 to 26.849 (Table 5).These outcomes suggest that the number of bars, cabarets, and laws favoring women’s equalityandfreedom are uniform, homogeneous, and predictive of the number of conservative religious parliamentarians and differences in attitudes toward women.

**Table 5. Anova**

| Between-groups Unweighted and Weighted Scales                                     | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | F      | p-value |
|---|----------------|-------------|--------|---------|
| Questions Favoring Conservative Positions   | .875           | .875        | 12.999 | .006    |
| Questions Favoring Egalitarian Positions  | 1.021          | 1.021       | 21.349 | .000    |
| Regression of the number of bars (Predictors) of the difference in attitudes.     | 11.123         | 11.123      | 20.991 | .000    |
| Regression of the number of cabarets (Predictors) of the difference in attitudes. | 12.495         | 12.495      | 26.760 | .000    |
| Regression of the number of laws (Predictors) of the difference in attitudes.     | 12.121         | 12.122      | 26.849 | .000    |

The nonparametric Cochran Odds Ratio test was selected to determine which group of Lebanese women (the zealot, those with strong association with religious resurgence, those with tempered association with religious resurgence, and those with weak association with religious resurgence) has higher self-esteem and life satisfaction scores. This test is ideal for the analysis of matched subjects and permits us to infer that Lebanese women with weak association with religious resurgence have self-reported the highest self-esteem (4.09) and life satisfaction (4.59) scores; most of these women were Protestant Christians. Concomitantly, Lebanese women who self-reported zealot religiosity levels also self-reported the lowest levels of self-esteem (1.19). The majority of this group were from the Muslim Shi'a sect. Concurrent with these two groups, Lebanese women who self-reported strong association with religious resurgence also self-reported the lowest levels of life satisfaction (1.32). The majority of this group were from the Muslim Sunni sect (Tables 3 and 6).

**Table 6: Means of Respondents' Religiosity, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction Levels (Homogeneity assessed with Cochran Odds Ratio Tests)**

| Respondents who Self-Reported Religiosity Level of: | Self-Reported Levels of Self-Esteem | Self-Reported Levels of Life Satisfaction |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Zealot  | 1.19 (Lowest)                       | 2.78                                      |
| Strong Association                                  | 1.98                                | 1.32 (Lowest)                             |
| Tempered Association                                | 2.91                                | 3.56                                      |
| Weak Association                                    | 4.09                                | 4.59                                      |

Hence, the outcomes of these Cochran post-hoc tests and those described in Table 3 permit us to reject our second and third null hypotheses, and conclude that there is a significant relationship between Lebanese women's religiosity levels and their levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Our study found that gender equity improved in some areas for Muslim Lebanese women since the beginning of religious resurgence from 1999 to 2004 and declined in other areas such as health care, political office holdings, and education. A 2004 *Shadow Report* published by CEDAW (National Committee for the Follow-up on Women's Issues, 2007) recognized some improvements since 1999 in increased female involvement in the public sector and in the judiciary. However, only 3 of 128 deputies in the government were women and that number has not changed into 2012. Women's participation remained at 2.3%, one of the lowest rates in the world. According to the 2004 report, illiteracy rates continued to drop through 2012, but the rate among women continued to be higher than the rate among men and women employed in the workforce continued to be over 50% lower than their male counterparts. Age and location continue to be significant factors, with older and rural women having the highest illiteracy rates and unemployment outside the home. An encouraging note is that the gap is narrowing in younger age groups. Nevertheless, overall the 2004 report concluded that gender equity has not become a reality. CEDAW published another *Shadow Report* in 2007 (National Committee for the Follow-up on Women's Issues, 2007). After reviewing the same aspects of gender as they had in 2004, the authors concluded: "The information we revealed in this report proves the fragility of the ads and procedures which the government adopted since 2004 until today. The

ministerial statement which allocated a paragraph for women is still ink on paper" (p. 74). Sadly, a recent United Nations report (2009) reinforces this conclusion. According to this report, despite some progress, both the HDI and the Gender Development Index (GDI) demonstrate ongoing inequalities between men and women. For example, illiteracy levels remain higher among women than among men.

There is a note of encouragement in this report that female students outnumber male students at both secondary and tertiary education levels. More specifically, the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which evaluates women's opportunities rather than their capabilities, suggests that gender equity is far from being achieved. The GEM measures three aspects of gender inequality: political participation, economic participation, and power over economic resources. In 1992 the GEM for women was 0.212, reflecting a very low level of achievement in these three areas. According to the UN report (2009), in 1992 Lebanon ranked 103 out of 116 countries evaluated. By 2008 the GEM for Lebanese women had risen to 0.350, still not a satisfactory improvement. The UN report acknowledges some improvements in the judicial area, where the number of female justices doubled between 1995 and 2004, from 55 to 107, while the number of male justices remained about the same (from 291 to 307). Nevertheless, the gap remains significant.

The UN report notes some increased control of women over economic resources related to greater participation in the work force and higher rates of academic enrollment. Nevertheless, the report states: "there are still possibilities for improvement, particularly given the levels of female graduates at the tertiary level, the increasing level of female participation in the labor force, and the rising number of female entrepreneurs" (p. 55). Moreover, "despite considerable gains, gender empowerment at decision-making levels remains pitifully low, particularly when the comparatively high levels of females enrolled in and graduating from tertiary level education are considered" (p. 58). More broadly, gender inequity continues to be reflected in laws related to citizenship rights. For example, a non-Lebanese woman who marries a Lebanese man is automatically granted residency and nationality. Children from such a marriage are also granted nationality automatically. On the other hand, a non-Lebanese man who marries a Lebanese woman is not automatically granted residency or nationality. He will be granted residency "only if he certifies that he will not engage in remunerated jobs, proves that he has a monthly income of LL5 million from transfers or pension fund and provides a bank statement proving he has an excess of LL300 million" (p. 59). If the man cannot gain residency on these terms, he becomes stateless or an illegal resident, as are any children born to the marriage.

The study has several limitations. As noted at the beginning, there is a lack of comparative cross-cultural research. In addition, the surveys were conducted only with students, so education and age factors also limit the generalizability of the findings reported here. Nevertheless, this study suggests that Muslim religious resurgence is biased against women. The data reported here permit the inference that women's movements during Muslim religious resurgence have experienced and will continue to experience major challenges to attaining equality and equity in the labor force, and in maintaining civil rights,



human rights, freedom of speech, suffrage, and political representation.

## Endnotes

1. Recent dramatic events in the Middle East may require a re-categorization of some countries including Syria and Egypt.
2. Defined in the U.S. Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1983, and 1984, and in the U.S. Voting Rights Act of 1965.
3. Due to Lebanon's republican form of government, its presidents and ministers may only be elected from the ranks of its parliamentarians. Both Amal and Hizbullah are Muslim Shi'a religious organizations.
4. As reported in a major Lebanese newspaper *Al-Nahar*, on September 6, 1992; September 15, 1996; and September 3, 2000, respectively, in the aftermath of three Lebanese national parliamentary elections.
5. Seven items of Gordon's (1968) nine-category coding system were employed to compartmentalize some of the study participants' self-reported assessments: (1) ascribed characteristics and material-physical self; (2) roles and memberships; (3) activities and interests; (4) abstract identification; (5) systemic self-reflection; (6) interpersonal social self; and (7) reference to the external situation.
6. Churches, mosques, dance halls, and cabarets were selected because they are readily visible indicators that may be used to measure religious resurgence. Business listings in phone books from 1990 and 2004 were used to deduce these numeric observations.

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