

## Doha International Family Institute – Qatar

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“The Strengths and Challenges of Families in Qatar” - Session No. 409-58 IN

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#### INTRODUCTION

##### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the strengths and challenges of Qatari families using qualitative and quantitative method. The themes that emerged as strengths included Commitment to the family, Support for each other; Effective communication; Respect for each other; Conveying values and family traditions; Family resilience; and Demonstrating love and affection for each other. Family challenges included family finances, gender considerations, outlook on divorce, relationship with partner, thoughts on programs for strengthening families. Implications for policy and future research are discussed.

#### METHODOLOGY

Qualitative focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews were conducted. Three focused groups (2 female group each of 5-7 and 1 male group of 5) and 15 interviews (7 male and 8 females). Quantitative survey was used with a sample of 934 Qataris to test the Qatari family strength inventory. The focus groups were asked to respond to a set of semi-structured questions designed to elicit a variety of answers. Rich data emerged as the participants shared experiences and beliefs. This poster will represent the data from the quantitative study.

#### RESULTS

**Family Strengths.** When asked to identify the strengths of their family, participants gave a variety of answers. Overall, seven especially important themes emerged across all focus groups: commitment of the family, support for each other, effective communication, respect for each other, conveying traditions, resilience, conveying love and affection for each other.

**Family Challenges.** Participants were also asked to identify the challenges that their family experiences. Together these yielded five common themes: **1) Family finances, 2) gender consideration, 3) outlook on divorce, 4) relationship with your partner, 5) thoughts on programs and services for strengthening families.**

#### FAMILY STRENGTHS

- Commitment to the family** showed very high percentages of strong agreement demonstrate, while lack of commitment is noticeably uncommon..
- Support for each other** showed strong family loyalty (99.23%), support (99.46%), and love among family members for participants (99.25%). Evidence that families share resources (94.95%) and help each other is also strong (95.7%). However, participants' support from extended family is less strong.
- Effective communication** showed that they use effective communication in the areas of listening (98.4%), constructive dialogue (96.24%), and problem solving (96.57%).
- Respect for each other.** included patience, trust, and appreciation. Respect for elders was very strong among participants
- Conveying traditions** show a high level of agreement (98.5%) among participants that traditions and values are passed between family members, with older family members most often playing the role of passing on those traditions. There is less agreement (33.33%) about whether family customs and traditions that are important to their identity have been lost.
- Resilience** results showed challenge of consumerism.
- Demonstrating Love and Affection for Each Other** was identified through statements such as showing affection, caring, kindness, and showing mercy although few participants talked about love directly. The highest level of agreement was for appreciation and love (98.5%).

#### FAMILY CHALLENGE

- Family finances,** reveals that the majority of the participants - (75.68%). - can live comfortably within their monthly household income. Most of them disagreed (69.24%) that they take a loan to cover a family vacation or a special event.;
- Gender consideration** , in the home, the majority of participants believe that household tasks should be equally-divided between genders and that boys and girls should be raised in the same way
- Outlook on divorce** indicate strong agreement among participants for infidelity, insults or belittlement, and physical violence as conditions for divorce, while financial problems and differences in traditions and customs had strong disagreement as conditions for divorce
- Relationship with your partner** Participants strongly disagreed that their partner had little regard for their relationship or that their relationship had serious difficulties;
- Thoughts on programs and services for strengthening families** results showed the highest level of agreement and need (96.33%) was for the substance abuse prevention, compared to 82.53% for 'more programs and services that help strengthen families.'

#### DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

- Previous research on families around the world has pointed to a common set of characteristics that can be called family strengths. Participants in the current study have used different words to describe what makes their family a strong family; and what are their challenges.
- The results showed that all the Qatari family strengths are closely related to each other, i.e., if a family possesses one of the family strengths, they are quite likely to possess the other strengths. On the basis of several tests of internal reliability and factor analyses, it can even be argued that the many family strengths as broken down in this study can be reduced to one over-arching quality or strength that can be labeled *positive emotional connection* or, with equal accuracy, *love*.
- It is reasonable to say that there are seven basic family strengths among Arab families in the Middle East in general, and among Arab families in Qatar in particular. All of the strengths, from our perspective, are of equal importance and cannot be ranked from most important down the line to those strengths that are of somewhat lesser importance.
- It can also be argued that *Commitment to the family* can be seen as especially important. In essence, a feeling of deep commitment can be seen as the glue that holds a family together. It is an almost critical quality that explains why family members can sacrifice so much for each other.
- Most important challenge was for the family finances and programs and services to strengthen families.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- New directions for educational programs, Family Counseling, and Governmental Family Policy. Family strengths concepts can be applied in four different types of endeavors: 1) family service programs; 2) family education programs; 3) marital and family therapy; and 4) developing strengths-based family social policy.
- Family service programs : by finding the strengths and find creative ways to build upon them. All families have the potential to grow and change. It is a challenging issue to work with families and help to see the strengths they already have. Most often, families are well aware of their problems, but rarely have ever talked about or assessed their strengths.. The Qatari families in the study registered considerable support for many different educational programs aimed at helping to strengthen couple and family relationships.
- Family Educational programs: A useful approach is, first, to work with the family and assess the family's strengths using a culturally-sensitive and specific instrument, such as *Qatari Family Strengths Inventory (QFSI)*. After the family has identified its strengths, they can develop a plan to maintain the important strengths they already have, and a plan to develop family strengths that they would like to enhance. Family education programs traditionally have focused on face-to-face meetings with groups of couples and parents.
- Marital and Family therapy: Basically, the approach we propose here is to help families find ways to work together to create a better life for themselves. We also recommend seeking the support of marital and family therapists to help family members learn that they are all on the same team, not opposing individuals or teams; and to enable them see their strengths and how these strengths can be used to be happier together.
- Developing strengths-based family social policy.** Strengths-based family policy would look at families as sacred and discussion about families should be done respectfully. A strengths-based family policy would stay out of political fistfights and recognize the reality that all the problems in the world either begin or end up in families.
- These programs would focus on issues chosen by the participants; and the seven family strengths and seven family challenges listed above are a good place to start when thinking about topics for discussion in educational programs.
- The online and face-to-face programs and educational materials would be developed by a coalition of family service programs, educational organizations, and religious institutions in Qatar.
- This work could serve as a foundation and catalyst for a broader effort in the region to create educational programs, government initiatives, and social policy aimed at strengthening families throughout the Arab world

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