

## **The Impact of Globalisation on Society and Culture in Qatar**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The discovery of oil and the economic development and growth that followed has placed Gulf Countries on the fast path to urbanisation and modernisation, bringing an impact on traditional family relations and functions. In particular, Qatar has experienced rapid and radical changes that are clearly shaping the family structure because of modernisation. Hence, one could argue traditional ways of life are under assault from modernisation and Westernisation. In order to examine the changes and the impact of modernisation on Qatari families, it is vital to examine the perspectives of Qatari citizens and their thoughts about particular elements of their lives that are affected by modernisation. There are a few studies that examine Qataris' perspectives. This descriptive study analyses 997 completed questionnaires from Qatari families as they present their perceptions of the influence of modernisation on themselves and their families. The findings present perceived changes occurring regarding the many areas of family life in Qatar.

*Keywords:* Globalisation, Qatar, Gulf Cooperation Council, family, culture

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, with the discovery of oil accompanied by explosive economic development and growth, Gulf countries such as Qatar have rapidly transitioned from poor, nomadic societies to wealthy urban societies (Byman & Green, 1999).

Globalisation has placed Qatar on a modernisation fast track that has led to great social and cultural consequences and societal transformation (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Renner and Martens (2003) argue that globalisation involves "cross-national cultural, economic, political, social and technological interactions that lead to the establishment of transnational structures and the global integration of cultural, economic, environmental, political and social processes on global, supranational, national, regional and local levels" (para,

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6). Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton have stated regarding globalisation that, "Few areas of social life escape the reach of processes of globalisation. These processes are reflected in all social domains from the cultural through the economic, the political, the legal, the military and the environmental" (1999, p. 27).

This is the case in Qatar, where globalisation is rapidly changing and challenging many of the local traditions and cultural values. In what follows, we examine possible cultural value conflicts that the country's nationals must wrestle with as they try to integrate the values of globalisation into their own traditions and culture. Examining the perspectives of Qatari citizens regarding their thoughts about particular elements of their lives that are influenced by globalisation provides insight into this complex phenomenon. This descriptive study presents findings from responses of Qataris on a variety of issues dealing with family and marriage.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term globalisation has been commonly used to describe important changes in world economic and societal integration (Chase-Dunn & Jorgenson, 2008). Globalisation can be understood as the process of increasing interconnection between countries and societies (Moghaddam & Rahma, 2012). Simply stated, globalisation "describes a constellation of processes by which nations, businesses and people are becoming more connected and interdependent via increased economic integration and communication exchange, cultural diffusion (especially of

Western culture) and travel" (Labonte & Torgerson 2005, p. 158). Globalisation has led to the point where events in one part of the world have considerable effects on other regions and societies (Baylis, 2007).

Held and McGrew (2000) argued that the dimension of globalisation is the "widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual" (p. 2). Thus, globalisation "is shaping a new era of interaction among nations, economies and people. It is increasing contact between people across national boundaries in economy, in technology, in culture and in governance" (United Nation Development Programs, 1999, p 25). The concept refers to the process societies undergo as a result of transitioning from one type of society to another and the effects of economic development of social and cultural structures and values. The term can be defined as an all-encompassing global process of cultural and socio-economic change where the developing society acquires some characteristics and elements common to advanced societies (Haviland, 2002).

Because of the growth of goods, people and information and the crossing of cultural borders, globalisation causes change in traditions and values. Society accepts these changes not only because they are necessary, but also because they prove beneficial to society and to the individual (Ibrahim et al., 2011). The process involves complex interrelated changes of many kinds and other

social changes that completely transform the lives of individuals. Basically, globalisation brings significant social, economic and political changes. It can be argued that globalisation is inevitable, based on the idea that competition strongly selects efficient societies and these will also be the most adaptively complex societies (Charlton & Andras, 2003). The competition and pressure to become more complex and modern makes modernisation not completely deterministic, but very highly probable because of the competition between societies. However, the principal *defining* feature of *modernising* societies is the tendency for permanent growth in the adaptive complexity of the social systems (Charlton & Andras, 2003). Because modernisation is not fixed, but rather dynamic, it is useful to think of modernisation as an evolving process rather than a state.

Byman and Green (1999) stated that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>1</sup> countries have modernised at a breathtaking pace since World War II. Furthermore, GCC societies have experienced radical changes since the end of the 1970s (El-Haddad, 2003). The discovery of oil (Saudi Arabia in 1938 and Qatar in 1940) is considered the critical element of globalisation in Arab Gulf societies because this moved the Gulf States into the international capitalist market (El-Haddad, 2003). One could argue that currently, the traditional way of life in the Gulf is under assault from globalisation.

<sup>1</sup> The six countries comprising the GCC are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

Al-Yousif (2005) stated, “Globalisation describes the dynamic process whereby the world economy is becoming more integrated because both technical advancements in a more liberal world trade system” (p. 9). A fundamental aspect of globalisation is what is termed cultural globalisation, referring to the fact that “contact between people and their cultures – their ideas, their values, their ways of life – have been growing and deepening in unprecedented ways” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 33). Globalisation fuels cultural conflict, and these conflicts are evident in almost every society, whether it experiences high levels of globalisation or not (Rothkop, 1997; Telo, 2001; Dutceac, 2004). Crawford (2007) pointed out that although globalisation is considered an integrating force, the cultural conflicts created by globalisation are extensive. The key element in cultural conflict is that the conflicts facing indigenous people involve challenge and threaten deeply held values, traditions and symbols.

A central claim of globalisation is that economic development and growth are directly linked to coherent and predictable changes in cultural and social and political life (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Many of these changes result in conflict because globalisation “tends to break down national borders (remove the boundaries of relative cultural considerations) and bring people (with different cultural values) into closer contact with other people, product and information” (Hird et al., 2007, p. 87). This close proximity enables the values of globalisation to impose a conflicting

relation with social values in developing and developed countries alike (Al-Ola, 2003). The key is that globalisation introduces and often imposes values that conflict with the values of developing countries. Al-Ola (2003) further indicated that globalisation imposes a value system on cultures, presenting these as central values represented by the West. These values are considered as 'modern' and often clash with the traditional social structures of a country. The indigenous group is left to wrestle with the problem of maintaining an appreciation of traditional values or imposition and practice of globalisation values in relation to their traditions.

Crawford (2007) argued that there are two aspects of the globalisation process that are significant triggers for cultural conflict, migration and trade. This argument plays out in the sense that "the expansion of trade and its requirement for state-shrinking impacts both the developed and underdeveloped world, immigration can ignite conflict in the industrialised West, turning homogeneous nations into heterogeneous societies with vast differences in wealth, values, and cultural practices" (Crawford, 2007, p. 34). The heterogeneous values challenges indigenous values and norms and this conflict surfaces as identity conflict. Naz, Khan, Hussain and Daraz (2011) argued:

*Cultural identity and globalisation are correlated and interconnected phenomena these days, where globalisation is a source of transformation of new and modern*

*ideas, development of human capital and information, but on the other side it is a threat to socio-cultural environment in the context of identity. (p. 2)*

In other words, globalisation shapes the world and the lives of individuals by the cultural and identity conflicts infused by globalisation within society. In addition, "Globalisation diffuses cultural traits and values from one society to other, which also disturbs the local culture" (Naz et al., 2011). The key is that globalisation changes the culture and the cultural identity of the local community or society, directly influencing cultural, religious and economic structure (Tomlinson, 1999). Furthermore, the impact of globalisation is evident in the changing values of the family, community and nation.

Globalisation attempts to bring about a global culture where values and beliefs are merged, that redefine cultural contexts. Baroud (2006) argued, "Indigenous cultures are under incessant attack, both literally and figuratively. Some have survived, some disintegrated and others still endure a fateful and decided struggle for recognition, for rights and for a space in an increasingly polarised world" (p. 8). Individuals face conflict as they struggle with their cultural identity, religion and traditions and cultural values because "The openness to foreign content can erode the traditional values and indigenous cultural identity (Naz et al., 2011). Lerche (1998) pointed out that there is some truth to the argument that one negative characterisation of globalisation

is that globalisation is an “engine” of social conflict.

There is little doubt that globalisation influences Gulf States. Now integrated into the capitalist market, Gulf societies have been exposed to direct interaction between Gulf States and the West, starting “ethnic, financial, technological, intellectual and ideological influences which [have] led to radical changes in the social and economic life of society. The changes transformed most Gulf societies into urban societies” (El-Haddad, 2003, p. 2). This is the case with Qatar, which officially became the richest nation in the world as measured by per capita gross domestic product in September 2011 (Edwards, 2011), largely as a result of globalisation.

Globalisation and modernisation have benefitted Qatar. These benefits include a massive educational reform, access to world-class education (for example, in Education City, which offers education from branches of prestigious universities from around the globe), an increase in living standards, improved transportation, financial opportunities and changes in society and lifestyles. Having embraced globalisation in search of greater economic and social benefits, Qatar has adopted ‘modern’ standards that shape Qataris’ lifestyle and culture.

Qatar’s economic growth has created an influx of high- and low-skilled expatriate workers, creating a major unbalance in the population and labour force between nationals and expatriates. The high number of expatriates of differing ethnicities has

perceptibly changed the country’s urban neighbourhoods. “Today Doha boasts residential areas and compounds [that are] home to an array of co-existing nationalities . . . many of which have been brought together indirectly by income level rather than by a shared cultural heritage” (Paschyn, 2012, p. 17). No longer does the traditional village structure exist; rather this has been replaced with “skyscrapers and housing compounds that neither represent nor relate to the cultural identities of the inhabitants” (Baroud, 2006, para. 4).

Qatar has been rapidly changing and one could argue that this rapid change has had negative aspects. Baroud (2006) argued that globalisation engages in a continuous discarding of the local culture for failing to present any sort of viable economic potential. For example, evidence is seen when “falafel restaurants in most Middle Eastern cities are nearly obsolete, while American fast food joints spring up at enormous speed throughout the region” (para. 6). He continued by stating:

*It comes as no surprise then, that the classic imperialism of the past and the more concealed cultural imperialism of the present were and are adamant in ensuring the slow yet irreversible dismantling of what makes a targeted indigenous culture distinctive and unique, its social and spiritual attributes, its economic pillars, its religious adherences; thus, its way of life* (para. 9)

The concern here is that globalisation attempts to strip Qatar of its sense of cultural heritage with social consequences, such as weakening of the use of Arabic language, a changed cultural identity and the decline of Islamic religious values and traditions. For example, there is little doubt that the globalisation and modernisation processes have changed family relations and family functions in GCC countries. El-Haddad's (2003) research has documented major changes affecting families in Gulf countries resulting from globalisation, modernisation and economic transformation. For example, the family's standard of living has risen greatly, enabling families to...

*Increase consumption, reflected in housing patterns, costs of marriage, types of cars and other lifestyle aspects. Economic and social changes have also produced numerous individualistic values at the expense of collective values, thereby resulting in widening the social distance between couples and their children in particular.* (El-Haddad's 2003, p. 17)

El-Haddad pointed out that the improvement of education because of globalisation presented a "new and powerful source of socialisation that competes strongly with traditional family roles or functions" (p. 4). Contemporary forms of communication coupled with peer influence "have increased the knowledge of young people and gave them specific alternatives

that put them in touch with peers all over the world, and especially in the West" (p. 4) influencing the values, traditions and practices of the youth, complicating the socialisation by their families.

The "rising standard of living of families have enabled them to provide wide alternatives to children (particularly daughters) that expanded their world and increased their demands, aspirations and expectations far beyond what existed in traditional society" (El-Haddad, 2003, p. 4). Furthermore, the rising standard of living has changed the functions and structure of the family with the family dependency on foreign babysitters (maids/servants). This dependency raises questions regarding socialisation of young children. In addition, the excessive economic abundance presently available creates a materialistic culture centring on "material differentiation (owning many cars, employing many domestics servants, extravagance in housing, clothing). The more of these symbols the family accumulates the higher its social status" (El-Haddad, 2003, p. 5).

Baqader (2003) argued that globalisation has changed family values, including changing the role of the husband and wife, increasing the number of women in the workplace, increasing the freedom of children and increasing the role of women in contributing to family finances.

The impact of globalisation in Qatar is evident in the number of women working. Women now have a voice in the living conditions of their families and share in decision-making, a transformation



not anticipated a few years ago. More importantly, women can take on these “roles without having to confront the existing cultural system which appears from the outside as a system that deprives her of some rights, or that places so many constraints on her that do not enable her to live happily” (El-Haddad’s 2003, p. 7); Qatar and Kuwait exhibited the highest rate of economic activity for females between 25 and 44 years old (61%) in 2000. However, traditions arising from male patriarchy still exist.

Finally, the marriage age in Qatari society for young males and females prior to 1999 was between 15 and 19 years of age. In 1999, a shift took place, moving the age to between 20 and 24 years (El-Haddad, 2003; General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2012). The latter category represented 43.9% of all marriages in Qatari society in 1999. In 2014, the average age of first marriage for women was 24.1 and 26.5 years for men (Ministry of Development and Planning Statistics, 2015). Overall, the average age at marriage for both men and women is rising, and more Arab women are staying single longer (Rashad, et al., 2005). Globalisation, modernisation and technology have created opportunities for men and women that previously never existed. Coffee shops, malls and mobile telephones all have facilitated contact among youth of both sexes outside family and societal control. These influence traditions and cultural values.

Regarding globalisation, the fundamental issue is the pressures of Western influences and values placed on

developing countries. These pressures create a climate where cultural conflict develops to the extent that it has to be addressed by the nations. This conflict must be resolved in some fashion, and this requires some interpretation, translation, mutation and adaptation in a dialectical manner (Tomlinson, 1991; Lull, 2000).

## METHODS

Globalisation is evident in cultural change. These changes are associated with shifts away from the local traditional norms and values and the embracing of uniquely Western values and thinking that non-western societies could follow, often with the consequence of the stripping of local values and traditions. Currently, there are few studies that examine Qataris’ perspectives regarding the elements of life that have been affected by globalisation. In order to examine the changes of globalisation on Qatar, it is important to begin to examine the perspectives of Qatari citizens and how they think about particular elements of their lives that have been changed by globalisation.

This study had three objectives, as follows.

1. To examine Qatari views regarding marriage, family life and the use of domestic help
2. To compare and contrast participants’ opinions with available literature
3. To analyse participants’ views in relationship to researchers’ personal experiences

This study represented part of a larger national study investigating Qatari family values, structure and lifestyle. The questionnaire was developed by a team of researchers conducting a comparative study of family values in the Middle East and Asian countries. Researchers represented universities from Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Qatar, Lebanon and Jordan. These researchers visited and interviewed families in Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates and based on these conversations, the questionnaire was developed. Cluster sampling was used to sample Qatar including the four largest populated municipalities including the capital city Doha. A professional research company in Qatar was contracted to go from home to home to administer the questionnaire. Each respondent was the head of a household (either male or female).

For this study, data were collected from three sources: a survey, relevant literature on Gulf States, including Qatar, and the personal experiences of the two researchers, one Qatari and the other an expatriate who has lived in the Gulf for eight years. Qatari nationals from various social and economic backgrounds, age groups and gender were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to obtain responses from participants in regards to family structure, relations and lifestyle. The sample was composed of 716 male and 281 female respondents. The ages of respondents ranged between 18 and over 65 years ( $M=37.64$ ,  $SD=13.73$ ). Table 1 shows the demographics of the study sample.

Three areas were examined in this study i.e. marriage, family life and the use of domestic help. Based on the research objectives, a survey including both open and closed-ended questions was developed that asked participants about their views of marriage, family life and the use of domestic help. Depending on the question, participants were given options to express frequency, degrees of agreement or disagreement or a selection of responses that applied to their situation. For example, some questions asked respondents, *To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Fairly Agree, 3=Somewhat Agree, 4=Somewhat Disagree, 5=Fairly Disagree and 6=Strongly Disagree.* Other questions required the respondents to respond to: *How often do you do the following? 1=Almost every day, 2=Several times a week, 3=About once a week, 4=About once a month, 5=Several times a year, 6=About once a year, and 7=Never.*

Our analytic process involved the interaction between the quantitative survey results and relevant literature on Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in particular Qatar. This process included engaging in self-reflection so a more comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives could be developed. Most empirical studies often ignore the researchers' reflections and experiences (Mruck, 2000). However, this knowledge is important because it provides insights into the realities of the particular research context. Nadig (2004) considered this type of self-reflection the examination of the researcher's thoughts and experiences



in relation to the participants and findings. In this study, this process was especially useful since one researcher was a national while the other was an expatriate. As these findings are described, we provide an insider and outsider's perspective (Banks, 1998) on participants' thoughts regarding particular elements of their lives that have been changed by globalisation, enabling us to shed light on these findings to improve understanding.

The quantitative survey results were analysed by calculating the number of individuals who selected each response. The database displayed frequency and percentages for each of the research objectives. Researchers then viewed the data and discussed what the data were saying in regard to the research objectives. Findings from the quantitative analysis were integrated with relevant literature in an effort to support or contest the findings.

### Limitations

All investigations have limitations that should be addressed. First, the survey limited participants' responses by not providing an avenue for a more developed verbal description of their thoughts and perspectives. Second, we could not consider participant responses as totally accurate because what the respondents actually did or really thought may have differed from their descriptions, and survey research can often be an over-simplification of social reality. Knowing that changes in cultural values are not static, but rather an interactive and dynamic process, this research provided a

Table 1  
*Description of the Study Participants*

Total Responses	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Father's Education	Mother's Education
997	997	0	994	1001	998
Male 716 (71.8) Female 281 (28.2)		18-25 (48.3) 26-35 (28.4) 36-45(14.4) 46-55 (6) 56-65 (2) 65 Above (1)	Married 598 (60.2) Widowed 28 (2.8) Divorced 24 (2.4) Single 344 (34.6)	No Formal Schooling 235 (23.5) Elementary 89 (8.9) Middle School 104 (10.4) High School 210 (21.0) College or University 204 (20.4) Graduate School 53 (5.3)	No Formal Schooling 332 (33.2) Elementary 144 (14.4) Middle School 104 (10.4) High School 181 (18.1) College or University 204 (20.4) Graduate School 33 (3.3)

snapshot of Qataris' views on globalisation and its influence on several cultural issues.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In what follows, cultural value conflict illustrated by current opinions of Qataris are described based on trends that emerged from the participants' responses. Regarding marriage, participants provided views that both clung to tradition and also demonstrated some shift in thinking on several issues. The participants' views on several aspects of marriage are illustrated in Table 2.

Participants indicated the belief that the husband should be older than his wife (77.6% subtotal agreed), a finding that seemed to support the tradition that women prefer older men because older men are thought to have a better grasp of both Muslim principles and the affairs of the secular world ("What Muslim Women," 2011). Generally, Gulf culture dictates that a husband should exceed his wife in age by a few years (4 years) as a roundabout guideline as men mature more slowly. Muslim women choose to marry men a decade older than them, but a wider age gap is not as controversial as it used to be. ("What Muslim Women," 2011).

Concerning children, Arab families are traditionally large, and large families are viewed to provide economic benefits and bestow on the father the prestige of virility. Males are favoured and are expected to care for their elderly parents. The idea of honour is changing, and both genders are required to honour their families; however, honour is still an important element in Qatari

families. When responding to the question whether children must make the effort to do something that would bring honour to their parents, 86.2% provided an overall agreement. Even in the midst of changing values and globalisation, the honour of the family is of highest importance.

When responding to the importance of children in marriage, 43.7% of the participants agreed that it was not necessary to have children in marriage. El-Haddad (2003) noted the importance of children in traditional thinking; however, now there seems to be a slow shift in thinking regarding the importance of children compared to traditional thought. Nevertheless, other responses indicated some contradiction on this point. Most of the participants (69.8%) agreed that it was important to continue the family line by having a son, yet only 32 agreed that the eldest son should inherit a larger share of the property. This indicated that males were considered important, while there seemed to be a movement away from inequality as very few felt that males should receive a larger inheritance than females.

Regarding interfaith marriage, the results indicate that a Muslim man should be allowed to marry a Christian woman, but a Christian man is not permitted to marry a Muslim woman. The general rule of Islam, however, is that Muslims should marry Muslims, and traditionally, it is considered unacceptable for Muslims and Christians to marry. These participants indicated a small shift in this thinking as 12.3% agreed that it is all right for a Qatari man (assuming the Qatari is a Muslim) to

Table 2  
*Qatari Views on Marriage and Children*

	Strongly Agree	Fairly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Subtotal Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Fairly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Subtotal (Disagree)
Husband should be older than wife	36.3%	25.9%	15.5%	77.6%	3.8%	2.4%	1.9%	8.1%
It is not necessary to have children in marriage	9.7%	11.4%	10.2%	31.3%	11.6%	13.0%	31.7%	56.3%
Children must make efforts to do something that would bring honour to their parents	49.0%	23.7%	6%	86.2%	2.5%	1.1%	4.7%	9.1%
The eldest son should inherit a larger share of the property	9.0%	9.2%	13.8%	32.0%	7.4%	8.3%	37.5%	53.2%
To continue the family line, one must have at least one son	33.9%	20.3%	15.7%	69.8%	5.3%	3.8%	6.7%	15.8%
It is all right for a Qatari man to marry a Christian woman	3.3%	3.6%	5.4%	12.3%	7.9%	24.5%	44.0%	76.4%
It is better for a man to have only one wife	27.7%	32.2%	16.0%	75.9%	4.1%	2.0%	2.5%	8.5%

marry a Christian woman. Although the majority disagreed with this statement, there was a small percentage who agreed with it; this indicated some change in opinion on interfaith marriage.

According to information provided for expatriates on living in Qatar, an Arab Muslim man is permitted to have up to four wives provided he can look after them materially and treat them equally. In Qatar, this practice is no longer being followed because of the expense and because women are more independent and assertive and refuse to accept such rules (*Marriage Laws and Expat Marriages in Qatar*, n. d.).

This is aligned with a 2010 study that revealed that there is a decline in polygamy rates in Qatar from 6.6% to 4% (Al-Delimi, 2010). Currently, the percentage of Qataris who have two wives is 8.4% while the percentage of Qataris who have two or three wives does not exceed 0.9% (Ministry of Development and Planning Statistics, 2015). Participants (75.9% agreed) also indicated that it is better for a man to have only one wife.

This change involves both economic and social values because “Qatari women are no longer dependent on men . . . in the past, only men worked so women did not object when their husbands remarried” (Al-Delimi, 2010, p. para. 7). In addition, the decline in polygamy is a sign of advancement for women and is directly related to change in the culture. Globalisation has created new perspectives where fewer women are willing to become second wives while an increasing number of first wives prefer divorce to

accepting a second wife (Al-Delimi, 2010).

One trend that has been documented by others (El-Haddad, 2003; Rashad et al., 2005) and is evident in this study is the delay in age at the first marriage. Traditionally, early marriage was the universal standard in Arab countries. Fakhreddine (2014) pointed out, “It is no secret that there is a lot of pressure on Arab American women to get married at a young age. Many find it difficult to concentrate on pursuing higher education because of cultural limitations” (para . 2). Fakhreddine (2014) wrote:

*Arab families have for their daughters to get married at a certain age often prevents these women from reaching their full potential. At lot of women in the community never had the opportunity to graduate from college because they were married off young. (para . 6)*

In this study, a mean of 23.46 was indicated for these participants for the age for their first marriage. One reason for this shift may be that the “rising standards of living of families have enabled them to provide wide alternatives to their children (particularly daughters) and this has expanded their world and increased their demands, aspirations and expectations far beyond what existed in traditional society (El-Haddad, 2003, p. 4). With the changes brought by globalisation, such as a shift in gender roles, the Arab tradition of early marriage and pressure to marry young is in conflict with delaying marriage for many

reasons such as education, more employment opportunities for women and the overall redefinition of the role of women. These women face cultural values and traditions that are in conflict with traditions of early marriage and new opportunities as a result of globalisation. Because of globalisation, Arab culture is more intermingled with Western culture and the pressure for early marriage has probably subsided somewhat as evidenced by the rising age of marriage.

Regarding the process of marriage, the family has always been at the centre of life in Arab societies. Unlike the Western world where men and women choose their spouses, in Arab culture marriage is arranged by family members and remains a social and economic contract between two families (Rashad et. al., 2005). Participants in this study indicated that there is some change taking place regarding how one gets to know one's spouse, where they meet and

who arranges their first meeting. Table 3 illustrates participants' responses to these three questions.

As Table 3 shows, participants reported little change from tradition in how they got to know their spouse with 62.3% reporting arrangement and 17.5% indicating they became acquainted with their spouse on their own. El-Haddad (2003) reported, "Local studies agree that the very limited chances given by society to young males and females to get acquainted prior to signing the marriage contract" (p. 11). Regarding the first introduction and where the meeting took place, most responded that the first introduction was traditional (parents or other relatives, 73.4%) and so was the first meeting with the spouse (family-related occasion, 64.9%). This supported tradition because most marriages are pre-arranged by parents, sisters, brothers, other relatives or friends. However, globalisation has

Table 3  
*Introductions to Spouse*

How did you get to know your spouse?	Arrangement	62.3%
	Introduction	20.2%
	Myself	17.5%
Who arranged or introduced the first meeting with your most recent spouse?	Siblings or cousins	13.1%
	Parents or other relatives	73.4%
	Friends or classmates	4.7%
	Colleagues	3.2%
	Matchmaker or professional matchmaking company	.3%
	Other	5.2%
Where did you meet your spouse?	Neighbourhood	12.9%
	School	4.3%
	Workplace	5.1%
	Family-related occasion	64.9%
	Other occasion	12.9%

exposed Qataris to change. For example, in traditional Arab Gulf cultures, it was not traditionally permissible for women to fully participate in the labor force (El-Haddad, 2003). This is no longer the situation, and with change comes a change in thinking. The key is that although women now have the opportunity to leave the house and seek education and work, this does not give them the right of self-determination (El-Haddad, 2003). More importantly, although women are more educated and culture is slowly changing, the power of tradition and patriarchy are still strong (El-Haddad, 2003).

One finding of the study that illustrated a change in thinking regarding marriage and relationships was that 14.1% of the participants agreed that it is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married (3.5% strongly agree, 4.5% fairly agree and 6.2% somewhat agree). Although 77.8% expressed some level of disagreement, the trend in thinking was quite surprising as Sharia law strictly requires punishment for unmarried people living in the same house. Although this is common in Western countries, it is strongly disapproved of in traditional Arab culture. Considering religion and tradition, couples are not permitted to be alone in a closed room or to go out together alone and no concept of courtship as it is practised in the West is allowed under Sharia law. It is very unlikely that Muslim couples will co-habitate. However, globalisation has introduced more liberal dress, social media and more liberal values. Globalisation exposes individuals to

change and this could be linked to the more liberal view on co-habitation. Whatever the reasons for participants' views, the 14.1% are pushing at the limits set by a society dominated by traditional views; this could be a result of globalisation creating conflict with traditional views on relationships.

Fewer Qataris are getting married, and those who do tend to divorce more than couples did a decade ago (Population and Social Statistics Department, 2011). In Qatar, divorce increased from 376 in 1995 to 391 in 1997, and then dropped slightly to 379 in 1999. In 2010, there were 820 divorce cases among Qataris (Population and Social Statistics Department, 2011). The participants' responses in this study regarding the issue of divorce seemed to support this trend, with a subtotal agreement of 52.3% with the statement that divorce is usually the best solution when a couple cannot seem to work out their marriage. However, 43.5% of the participants believed that couples should wait to get divorced until the children were grown. This thinking could be supported by the 2010 statistics that indicated that the majority of divorces occurred between couples with no children (57.1%), followed by couples with one child (15.5%) and then couples with two children (10.2%) (Population and Social Statistics Department, 2011).

With globalisation, the roles of women and expectations for them have changed as well. These new values are in conflict with traditional values that are ingrained in the culture. For example, the increase in divorce is a result of many factors.



“Up to 36% of divorces were the result of ‘wives disobeying their husbands,’ while the next highest percentages were because the wife was ‘misbehaving’ (20%), and ‘neglecting house chores’ (17%)” (Doha News, 2012). In addition, education levels, with a decreasing number of male university graduates and three times as many women as men graduating, are changing the divorce rate as well (Doha News, 2012). The reference to wives “misbehaving” in Qatari society can mean a wide range of behaviour considered disrespectful to a husband from having extramarital affairs to simply chatting and laughing with male colleagues at work. Thus, a broad range of “misbehaviour” can lead to divorce.

It is evident from the findings of this study that there is a concern about extramarital affairs. Findings from this study indicated that a large majority of participants disagreed (76.8% and 81.3%) that it is all right for men or women to engage in extramarital affairs. However, 15.5% agreed at different levels that it is all right for a married woman to have an affair and 12.2% agreed at different levels that it is all right for a married man to have an affair. Keeping in mind the seriousness of adultery in Gulf countries, it is clear there is small shift in thinking regarding this issue. Khalil (2011) wrote:

*The observed and assessed punishment for the crime of adultery is considered among the sanctions that aim at protecting the interests of society as well as the protection of victims. The Criminal Code prescribed*

*severe penalties for this crime that reaches the death penalty, in order to maintain the fabric of society and so that the legal marriage would be the right way for engagement of men and women to form a family and to be the nucleus of the community.*  
(para . 1)

The punishment for those who commit adultery is defined by the Sharia law and not by civil law. Although less than 15% agreed with the statement, this seemed to indicate a trend in thinking; however, keep in mind that the respondents were sharing their view and this cannot be taken as behavior they would adhere to.

Arab culture honours and respects the family. Abudabbeh (1996) claimed that the family is the cornerstone of Arab culture. Although there might be differences between countries “in the intensity of the centrality of the family, but not the impact on the dynamics of family. Final authority rests with the father, or in his absence with the oldest male in the family” (p. 430). This is supported by 82.0% of the participants, who agreed with the idea that the authority of the father in a family should be respected under any circumstances. Although globalisation may place stress on the family, the Arab family structure remains the main system of support, and currently there is no institution that has replaced its role (Abudabbeh, 1996). The participants of this study, therefore, agreed with El-Hadded (2003) that, “We can still observe some indicators that signify contraction and

retreat in patriarchal family structures” (p. 12). Furthermore, the importance of family honour continues to be stable in Qatar, as demonstrated by 86.2% of participants expressing belief that children must make an effort to do something that would bring honour to their parents. Even in the midst of great economic change, traditional values regarding the family seem to be stable.

In the Gulf States, there is a heavy reliance on domestic help. El-Haddad (2003) argued that this dependency of Gulf families on domestic servants “has to do more with the urban culture that was introduced by the financial provisions resulting from increased wealth” (p. 5). In many Gulf countries, “Children are often looked after by hired help. But the role of “nanny” is usually undertaken by women from non-Arabic-speaking countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia, who officially live and work in Qatar as ‘housemaids’ (Walker, 2015, para . 10). According to these findings, nearly 80% of Qatari households employed at least one domestic worker; 27.3% of Qatari household employed one domestic worker; 25.4% employed two domestic workers; 14.5% employed three; 6.7% of Qatari families employed four workers; 2.9% had five workers; 1.5 employed six and roughly 1.5% of Qatari households employed from seven to 11 domestic workers. This directly influences family life regarding work and childcare. Table 4 illustrates participants’ responses regarding their role in household work.

Table 4 demonstrates that the majority of these participants did not engage in

household chores most of the time. This clearly supported the concern that there is a strong dependency on domestic workers. More importantly, 90% of the sample of women in Qatar preferred to maintain their dependence on domestic servants (El-Haddad, 2003). Table 4 also demonstrates that Qataris did not rely on their maids to do the grocery shopping. This seems odd; however, from our own experiences, the reason for this centres on the issue of the trust in the domestic help. Kovessy (2015) pointed out, “Domestic workers are not covered by Qatar’s labour law, making them vulnerable to several abuses . . . being prohibited from leaving their sponsor’s residence unaccompanied” (para. 11). If the domestic help were to do the grocery shopping, they would have to be trusted with money. Also, the worker would be alone, and this permits some freedom to make friends or possibly to leave their employer and not return. These reasons could explain why Qataris go grocery shopping and take their maids with them to help.

Table 4 also demonstrates the belief by the majority of the participants that both the mother and father are responsible for childcare and that the mother is foremost in providing childcare. Few participants acknowledged that domestic workers are responsible for or are actually provide childcare. Most Qatari families, regardless of whether mothers are employed outside the home, employ foreign maids; however, the participants’ view of the role of domestic help and childcare seemed to clash with some of the common problems that are

raised about domestic help in Qatar.

Dhal (2011) wrote, “94 per cent of 23,851 Emirati families surveyed in Dubai keep nannies or housemaids to help in the rearing of their children and other household tasks” (para. 6). This is not only true for UAE, but also for Qatar: “substituting maternal care for paid childcare in the familial home is related to the near universal employment of female housemaids by Qatari families” (Evans, Powell-Davies, & Chung, 2010, p. 29). From the participants’ responses, it can be inferred that their maids did not play a significant role in raising their children. However, this seemed to be challenged by the government, who wants to find a way to decrease Qatari women’s dependency on housemaids to raise their children (The Peninsula, 2013).

Regarding the role of domestic servants, Chatriwala (2012) mentions that Qatar’s Permanent Population Committee “has recommended decreasing the Qatari

household dependency on maids, most local families say that maids are inevitable to keep the house running .” Furthermore, this concern about the prominent role handed to domestic servants is evident in a recent policy put into place by Hamad Medical Corporation. Starting in April 1, 2015, “Public pediatric centers will not treat children who are brought in for routine or non-emergency treatment by a housemaid, nanny or driver” (Walker, 2015, para. 2). This policy raises questions about the prevalence of household help in Qatar and its effect on childcare.

The socialisation of children and the influence of various cultural values and languages through the influence of domestic servants in the Qatari household has serious consequences on Arab values and language and has negative effects on Arab children’s behaviour (El-Haddad, 2003). In addition, “Most domestic servants (maids) are not trained to raise children or to care for them.

Table 4  
*Qataris and Household Work*

How often do you do the following?	Almost every day	Several times a week	About once a week	About once a month	Several times a year	About once a year	Never
Prepare the evening meal	12.9%	13.0%	10.0%	9.5%	7.9%	6.8%	39.8%
Do the laundry	6.7%	7.1%	8.1%	6.2%	5.0%	4.6%	60.4%
Clean the house	8.8%	7.8%	10.5%	8.1%	6.9%	4.9%	53.0%
Take out the garbage	8.3%	8.2%	7.2%	6.8%	4.8%	4.4%	60.3%
Grocery Shop	11.6%	23.0%	23.3%	13.8%	8.5%	3.3%	16.6%

They add that the characteristics of the maids, such as education, language, religion age, don't qualify them to raise children" (Haddad, 2003, p. 5).

## CONCLUSION

These findings provided a glimpse of Qataris views on various issues regarding family, marriage and other relevant issues. Certainly these views are limited because of the lack of data available regarding how Qataris previously viewed these specific issues and little research that examined long-term changes in values. More importantly, there are some topics raised in this research that have not been studied. For example, extra-marital affairs have not been studied. Nevertheless, these findings presented a glimpse into the current thinking of a sample of Qataris regarding family and related issues.

The thesis in this paper is that globalisation creates cultural value conflicts and that individuals must deal with these conflicts. Inglehart and Baker (2000) pointed out that there are two schools of thought regarding modernisation and globalisation and the shifting of values. One school emphasises:

*The convergence of values as a result of "modernisation" – the overwhelming economic and political forces that drive cultural change. This school predicts the decline of traditional values in their replacement with "modern" values. The other school of thought*

*emphasises the persistence of traditional values despite economic and political changes (p. 20).*

This first view believes that values are somewhat independent of economics. The second school of thought believes that it is unlikely that there will be a merging of traditional and modern values because "traditional values will continue to exert an independent influence on the cultural changes caused by economic development" (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, p. 20). Examples from this study seem to support both schools of thought. The convergence of values is evident in such examples as a small percentage who think that extra-marital affairs are allowed and the clear indication that many participants delay marriage. The persistence of traditional values is found in other examples, such as how spouses first met and the authority of the father in family life.

It seems that there is a set of core values identified as terminal values (Schwartz, 1992) that serve as the core social fabric of a society and these are unlikely to change in response to the many aspects of globalisation. There is also, however, a set of instrumental values (Schwartz, 1992) vulnerable to conflict where differences in views occur. These values are more susceptible to change and are, therefore, more directly affected by globalisation. These are the values and changes that need to be examined and understood more fully in order to see the consequences of globalisation on Arab cultures.

Another concern is that globalisation is a very complex issue occurring at various levels and speeds that make it difficult to measure. Hofstede (1984) argued that change is a very slow process, while other researchers believed change is more rapid and the research on values must be periodically updated (Triandis, 1984). The speed of change in values will greatly depend on the values that one is considering. Terminal values will take more time to shift if at all, while instrumental values could be changed rather quickly. In order to gain a more complex understanding of the change in values, there is a need to focus on what specific values are changing and the degree of change. This research does not claim to have analysed these changes regarding degree or speed, but rather provided a glimpse of the participants' thinking and compared this to the current literature available. Clearly, more research is needed to test if general patterns in value shifts can be uncovered, keeping in mind that the vast phenomenon of globalisation cannot be fully explained by one statistic. This research, however, provides an important step in developing an understanding of globalisation and its impact on Qatari society. In closing, it is clear that Qatari family life will not be change to be similar to family life in Western cultures in the next few decades; however, there will be changes as the globalisation process affects Qatar. It is important to begin examining these changes through research. The use of interviews could prove useful in probing individual opinions.

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