

The Collapse of Semi-Legal Institutions Among Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel and Their Impact on Intimate Partner Femicide in the Community

Arnon Edelstein, Lea Itzik
Ashkelon Academic College, Ashkelon, Israel

Ethiopian Jews belonged in Ethiopia to a patriarchal culture, where violence against women was not only acceptable but legitimate. In extreme cases, the battered woman could appeal to the community's elders. They functioned as a semi-legal institution, acting as a barrier against extreme violence towards women and preventing incidents of intimate partner femicide (IPF). In Israel, battered women began to avoid the elders after learning that it was preferable to appeal to the social services and lodge formal complaints about violent partners with the police. Ethiopian women are overrepresented in IPF to the extent of 16 times the rate in Israel's population. The professional literature emphasizes socio-cultural changes, such as the reversal of gender roles and status among Ethiopians in Israel, as the main risk factors in IPF. However, psychological risk factors must also be considered concerning these changes and that some Ethiopian men cannot accept them. The current article points out specific triggers and aims to address whether the collapse of the elders as a mediation mechanism has contributed to the high levels of IPF among Ethiopian women in Israel.

Keywords: Ethiopian, IPF, immigration, acculturation, mediation mechanism

Introduction

The concept according to which the State of Israel serves as a home to all Jews has transformed immigration to the country, commonly known as *Aliya*, into an institution that wields considerable influence in Israeli society (Shoham, 2010). A variety of factors determine the adaptation and integration of the immigrant. The cultural transition that occurs is known to constitute one of the most serious crises in the life of the individual, the family, and the community. Such crises may be minimal or minor in the transition between similar cultures and severe in a transition between dissimilar cultures (Edelstein, 2000). Crises among immigrants on the level of the individual and the family stem from a range of variables, including changes in the individual's occupation and unemployment, both of which involve a decline in socio-economic status. Some crises go hand in hand with normative changes involving cultural differences, with implications regarding how the new world is understood by the individual and the family, new and different social roles, changes in marital relations between men and women, and parent-children interactions. All of the above can be manifested in the loss of authority and the upending of roles and status, which in turn can raise the level of

frustration, violence, depression, and despair among new immigrants, who have had to discard what they once had without acquiring an appropriate substitute.

The above changes and crises are particularly conspicuous among immigrants who have undergone a significant cultural change, such as a transition from a patriarchal society to one that is based on greater social equality (Carrillo & Zarza, 2006; Kim, Lau, & Chang, 2007; Klevens, 2007; Rodriguez, Valentine, & Muhammad, 2009). The results of crises have been reported extensively in the theoretical and research literature. This transition is cited as a factor that increases the risk to the lives of women, being victimized by spouses who are forced to undergo significant alterations in their lives, including changes in their self-image and in their ability to cope with severe psychological issues (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Carrillo & Zarza, 2006; Jin & Keat, 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Lee & Hadeed, 2009; Morash, Bui, Zhang, & Holtfreter, 2007; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2009; Vatnar & Bjorkly, 2010; Websdale, 1999; Yu, Stewart, Liu, & Lam, 2014).

The intercultural transition undergone by Ethiopian immigrants is associated with severe crises on a community level and those experienced by the individual and the family. As a community, there is a need to preserve the culture of the old country, and a person who alters his lifestyle as a result of acculturation and integration into a new culture could be perceived as a traitor to his traditional culture and heritage (Edelstein, 2000; Sellin, 1938). Worse, in the transition from a patriarchal society to one that is modern, with the ensuing change in the roles and status of men and women, the social image of the man could be impaired, not only vis-à-vis his wife, but also in the eyes of other men in the community (Edelstein, 2011).

Since 2004 Ethiopian women are over-represented in intimate partner homicide. While Ethiopians constituted 2% of the general population, their murder rate was 16% of all intimate partner femicide (IPF) in Israel (Benita, 2017; Israel Police, 2011). A perusal of the theoretical and research literature on the Jews of Ethiopia has found no records pertaining to IPF in origin (Ethiopia). The elders confirmed these data in the community and other articles (Edelstein, 2011). The fact that IPF began only after the absorption in Israel leads the assumption that the phenomenon is associated significantly with socio-cultural changes that have taken place.

The main aim of this article is to examine the extent to which semi-legal institutions in Ethiopia, which were engaged in settling disputes between spouses and preventing cases of extreme violence and murder, have ceased to function following immigration to Israel, thereby paving the way for the emergence of these disturbing manifestations.

Socio-Cultural Structure of Jews in Ethiopia

The Jews in Ethiopia lived principally in rural areas, with each village comprising a number of households. Socio-cultural life centered around patriarchal communities with a strict hierarchy according to gender and age, and men were enjoying greater privileges than women. This was evident on two levels. First, the village leaders were men only; the religious-spiritual-chief occupied the top of the echelon—the Kes—under whom were the village elders (“Shmagluch”) (Barhani, 1990; Salmon, 1987), their role being to maintain social order.

Another manifestation of the patriarchal mindset was the clear, strict division of work according to gender. The man was solely responsible for the family’s livelihood (being engaged in farming and pottery) and representing the family vis-à-vis external entities. In contrast, the woman was responsible for the inner workings of the household: cooking, cleaning, and raising the children. The woman and children were under

the man's absolute authority, and any deviation from his demands could end with violent physical punishment (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Bodovsky, Eran, & Yehiel, 1990; Bodovsky, Yosef, & Yehiel, 1992; Bodovsky, David, & Ronen, 1994).

Verbal abuse, and more so physical abuse, was regarded as a normal and legitimate means of control that could be used by the man on his wife and children if they failed to carry out the social duties incumbent upon them. In the case of moderate physical violence or when the woman feared a severe outburst of violence, the only option she had was to flee to the kitchen, where the man never entered since it was below his dignity to do so (Bodovsky et al., 1992). The women accepted their role as victims of the man's violence as part of their social and cultural norms. They underwent acculturation to the patriarchal society from birth, recognized their place in society, and were committed to absolute obedience to their husbands, including his demands for sexual intimacy (Kacen, 2006; Wallach, Weingram, & Avitan, 2010; Gal, 2003). Another important custom is family and matrimonial affairs, emphasizing that arguments and other acts within the family are the family's affairs alone. The airing of dirty linen in public is prohibited. This tenet referred primarily to sporadic, moderate acts of violence (Kacen, 2006).

Semi-Legal Institutions Headed by Elders of the Community in Ethiopia

The Shmagluch ("elder" in Amharic) are persons approached by married couples in Ethiopia in dispute cases. They are second in importance in terms of the hierarchy in the Jewish community after the religious leader—the Kes (Shabtai & Assael, 2011). The elders were recognized as authorities in settling disputes. Their principal role was to maintain a delicate balance between legitimate violence on the husband's part towards his wife if she strayed from her gender duties and the woman's protection. In instances of recurrent disputes between husbands and wives, or extreme violence on the husband's part towards his wife, the wife had the option of seeking refuge with her birth family (which generally lived in another village). In turn, the woman's birth family would approach the husband's family in an attempt to settle matters between them (Gal, 2003; Kacen & Keidar, 2006; Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday, 2005; Kacen, 2006). Where the families fail in restoring peace, they would approach the community's elders. These were not relatives of the family and constituted a neutral party in the dispute. In a serious disagreement, a council of several elders was formed, headed by the most senior among them. A date was set for a meeting attended by the couple in dispute, the parents, and other relatives. Arbitration would be conducted uninterruptedly for hours or days, during which it was customary for the elders of the community to refrain from eating or drinking. In addition, they would receive no payment for their work, which was considered a good deed performance (Kacen & Keidar, 2006).

Following an investigation into the matter, attempts would begin to persuade the parties to change their problematic behavior. At first, negotiations would be held with each of the parties, following which severe pressure would be exerted. In such cases, the community elders were even given authority to lie to the couple—the aim of bringing about domestic harmony justifies the ends. The elders imposed a condition on the guilty party, and he would have to undertake to adhere to it through a guarantor who was not a relative but who was acceptable to both parties. If the condition were breached, the guarantor would reprimand the guilty party and report the matter to the elders. The agreement regarding domestic harmony could also include certain sanctions: a fine, a demand for divorce, expulsion from the home. If the elders were unsuccessful in their mission, they would approach the Kes, who would rule in favor of divorce (Kacen, 2006; David, Bodovsky, Eran, 1989; Bodovsky et al., 1990; 1992; 1994). A resemblance can be seen between the above process and

legal proceedings in modern society. The parties aired their grievances in court, and the judge (the elder or Kes) made a ruling.

Several cities in Israel have adopted the traditional process of the elders and have assisted in training community representatives in adapting it to the status quo and law in Israel. Thus, for example, mediation centers in Jerusalem, Lod, Ramla, Rehovot, and Beer Sheva work together with the elders on various issues to establish domestic harmony. The elders are currently active in the rabbinical law courts and family affairs law courts' framework while collaborating with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Social Services as required (Shemer, 2013). Israel Police (2011) has also recognized the potential inherent in lending assistance to the elders of the Ethiopian community when the common aim is, among other things, to have the elders intervene in minor disputes in the community and the family to the mutual consent of the parties. As the case may be, the process is accompanied by a social worker who is an Amharic speaker. In cases of violence between married couples, intervention by the elders is conducted under the supervision of law-enforcing agents and by police procedures. At the same time, the recommendations emerging from the process are conveyed to the police and welfare authorities for further action based on the implementation of the recommendations (Kogan & Moola, 2005). A research study conducted by Sharabi (2013) found that the police authorities prefer to turn a blind eye in cases of minor abuse and refer the matter to the elders instead of implementing the enforcement procedures in existence by the law, even encouraging the parties to resolve the dispute in this manner. Interviewees in the research framework described how they helped a husband understand the different mentality existing in Israel, inducing the family in general, and the wife in particular, to change their *modus operandi*.

Immigration to Israel and Its Implications

As of late 2018, the population of former Ethiopian residents in Israel numbered 151,800 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Members of the Ethiopian community who immigrated to Israel belong to the Beita Israel (Home of Israel) group, or as referred to by their neighbors, "Falasha". Immigration from Ethiopia to Israel was conducted principally in two rescue operations: Operation Moses (1984) and Operation Solomon (1991-1992). These operations were carried out with the Mossad and US intelligence organizations (Shimron, 1998).

In towns and neighborhoods where the Ethiopians were settled, it was found that unemployment, a dropout from the educational system, and anti-social behavior were higher than those in other towns (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Gal, 2003; Herzog, 1998; Kacen & Keidar, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2005; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Kacen, 2006). Married couples were for the first time in their lives exposed to a new family structure—the nuclear family, which dictated ways of dealing with interpersonal conflicts that in Ethiopia would have been resolved by traditional means or would not have surfaced at all. Data collected on the state of former Ethiopian residents in Israel show that among adults, the employment rate is lower than that is expected in Israeli society, with unemployment among men reaching 40%. The percentage of individuals employed in non-professional jobs is significantly higher among Ethiopians than the rest of the population, while the rate of Ethiopian women in the workforce is higher than the percentage of women in the labor market overall (Haviv, Halben-Eilat, Shatz, & Almog, 2010; National Insurance Institute, 2018). Interestingly, in a study examining the labor participation of married immigrants and married majority women in Norway, findings suggest that the husbands' employment status positively impacted the wives' chances of finding work (Brekke, 2013).

The absorption in Israel of Ethiopian men has been different from that of Ethiopian women. The unemployment rate among the immigrants points to difficulties in adaptation and absorption in the labor market,

which is key to integration in society in general. The Ethiopian man did not have the skills and education that were suited to modern Israeli society. At the same time, no attempt was made to include these men in agricultural training courses or occupational programs (Svirsky & Capela, 2005). According to Sellin (1938), a person who has not yet embarked on a process of cultural absorption acts following the norms of his home culture without sensing any cultural conflict. Thus, only after the immigrant has internalized the dos and don'ts of the new culture, which conflict with those of his home culture, he will feel a cultural conflict.

Whereas Ethiopian men have aspired to maintain the norms of their patriarchal culture, which had placed them in a socially superior position to that of the women, the opposite process may be seen to be taking place with Ethiopian women (Shapiro-Zur, 2013). The entry by Ethiopian women into Israel's more egalitarian society has opened up for them an attractive world in which the man is no longer allowed to control them as they did in the old country, beat them, or impose sexual relations on them. Women in Israel receive incentives to work directly to their bank accounts without their husbands controlling these payments. All this constituted a complete contrast to the home culture while raising the status of the Ethiopian woman to a significant extent (Edelstein, 2011; Kacen & Keidar, 2006).

The Ethiopian woman in Israel has gained empowerment with the help of veteran Israeli women, who have made them aware of their rights and have encouraged them to undergo speedy acculturation to Israeli society while denouncing any act of violence on the part of the husband. A dramatic change in the life of the Ethiopian woman is associated with the "code of respect". Whereas according to Ethiopian culture, individual and marital affairs are confined to the family, the Ethiopian woman has learned that she can involve women in essential positions and consult with them about private life, financial management, rights, and support (Edelstein, 2011; Kacen & Keidar, 2006; Kacen, 2006; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010).

Cultural Change, Risk Factors in Femicide in General, and Murder of Ethiopian Women in Particular

The professional literature devoted to studying the cultural transition between a patriarchal society and an egalitarian one has found that immigration of the type described involves high-risk factors for violence towards the murder of female immigrants by their husbands. The principal reasons for this are the reversal of gender roles and status, the depreciation in the status of the man, and the consequent reliance on violent, lethal conduct out of frustration, anger, despair, and a desire to maintain the social status he had in the old country (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Bornstein & Cote, 2014; Carrillo & Zarza, 2006; Jin & Keat, 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Lee & Hadeed, 2009; Martin & Hollifield, 2014; Morash et al., 2007; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Vatnar & Bjorkly, 2010; Websdale, 1999). Similar and even identical phenomena have occurred in Israel among former residents of Ethiopia (Kacen, 2006; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Edelstein, 2011).

The three mainstays of power possessed by men in patriarchal-traditional societies, including Ethiopian men, are: (1) financial dependence on the man by his wife and children by being the sole breadwinner in the family; (2) patriarchal society has institutionalized male superiority, including the extra privileges enjoyed by the man due to the very fact of his being male; (3) the Ethiopian male, by his high status, can resort to physical violence towards a wife who refuses to conform to the code of conduct expected from an Ethiopian woman (Kacen, 2006; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010).

In immigrating from a patriarchal culture to egalitarian and modern, a situation could arise in which the man is unemployed and/or is not the sole wage earner. Such a situation puts the power and status of the man in

jeopardy. To ensure the superior status of the man under any conditions, the concept of the second mainstay of power has been established, granting him clout based on his very masculinity. However, his masculinity depends on his ability to earn a livelihood and impose his authority on his family. Where both these pillars of power are jeopardized, the man can resort to the third pillar at his disposal, namely, use of violence towards the person endangering his status (Carrillo & Zarza, 2006; Jin & Keat, 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Lee & Hadeed, 2009; Morash et al., 2007; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Vatnar & Bjorkly, 2010; Websdale, 1999).

Whereas in the past, essential mechanisms existed that maintained the status of the man and the social order, the elders of the Ethiopian community in Israel had been eroded to the point where they can no longer serve in their traditional roles. The transition to Israel and the cultural changes that have occurred among Ethiopian immigrants have virtually extinguished the three mainstays of power held by the Ethiopian male. A review of employment data shows a rise in employment of Ethiopian women, in contrast with relatively low employment rates of Ethiopian men (Edelstein, 2013; National Insurance Institute, 2018). This phenomenon is rooted in several causes: the Ethiopian male lacks the educational and occupational skills required in Israel's modern labor market; employers in non-professional occupations (manual labor in industrial plants, general cleaning jobs) prefer to employ women who are paid less than men; some Ethiopian men would instead not work in jobs they consider to be unworthy.

In parallel with this phenomenon, and as a result of Ethiopian women going out to work, many Ethiopian women have become the chief, if not the only, breadwinners in the family. This is in addition to payments they receive from the National Insurance Institute directly to their bank accounts. The result has been a significant rise in women's status concerning financial decision-making in the family (Haviv et al., 2010).

About the second and third pillars of power, the fact of women going out to work has brought them face to face with new norms that have opened up a new world for them in which the status of women in the family can be much more egalitarian, one in which women do not have to submit entirely to the wishes of their husbands. The women have learned that divorce from a violent or unsavory husband is legitimate in Israeli society, which has a divorce rate of around 30%. Apart from this, however, Ethiopian women have learned that violence towards a spouse is not only deviant but criminal and constitutes conduct that calls for formal complaint (Kacen, 2006; Shuval, 1979; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Kacen & Keidar, 2006). The Ethiopian male has thus lost the three components of power he had in the old country and was instrumental in maintaining his social status. The requirement of the absorbing society to undergo acculturation and a change in the cultural norms of the home country has caused Ethiopian men to feel that they have fallen from a very great height. They have not only lost muscle by the very fact of their being male but have also shed their masculinity in their view, in the view of their spouses and children, and the view of their male friends.

Some Ethiopian men regard their wives as responsible for their condition and the loss they have experienced since the wives became providers. Some women wish for separation from their husbands and can have them removed from the home through a restraining order—this being a response to the man's use of the only means he knows to deal with the threat to his status, namely, violence (Edelstein, 2011). If the explanations for violence towards spouses and IPF among men in general, and Ethiopian immigrants in particular, had a social-cultural basis only, one would expect all immigrants, or at least the majority of them, to behave violently towards their wives. Since the violence of this nature, and especially extreme violence, manifested in IPF, is not common, the explanations proposed are not sufficient to understand the phenomenon, and psychological explanations on the level of the individual must also be explored (Edelstein, 2011; 2014).

In this context, it is worth considering the concept of acculturation stress. Research studies have found that among Ethiopian men and other male immigrants the world over, a range of mental disorders have been observed due to the socio-cultural processes described above. Due to the inability of some of the immigrants to cope with the various changes in their lives, including their self-image and new identity, extreme cases have been reported of depression, suicidal leanings, outbursts of anger, and psychiatric hospitalization (Ponizovsky & Grinshpoon, 2009; Youngmann, Minuchin-Itzigsohn, & Barasch, 1999; Youngmann, Pugachova, & Zilber, 2009; Finkelstein & Salomon, 2007).

Triggers Involved in IPF in General, and Among Ethiopians in Particular

The literature refers to an extensive range of risk factors concerning violence towards wives and IPF (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007; Garcia, Soria, & Hurwitz, 2007; Van Wormer & Roberts, 2009), although methodological problems exist in these factors. In a particular case, risk factors were examined retrospectively in the wake of a murder, while some were inferred from the circumstances surrounding the relationship before the murder. It should be borne in mind that risk factors can remain dormant, and the absence of a trigger would not be relevant (Campbell et al., 2007).

The discussion herein has focused on risk factors associated with immigrants who move from patriarchal-traditional societies to modern-egalitarian societies. Most men who do not commit IPF point to significant personal differences and the need for triggers that would activate the risk factors. Research studies carried out in various parts of the world (Campbell, 2007; Edelstein, 2013) found three principal triggers in connection with IPF: the wife's desire to cease intimate relations; the suspicion of sexual infidelity on the part of the wife; and previous complaints and disputes between the couple. In Israel, a study was carried out to examine the phenomenon among three population groups: veteran Israelis, immigrants from the former USSR, and immigrants from Ethiopia. The study examined all verdicts and sentences passed by law courts in connection with men who had committed IPF (Edelstein, 2011) and found that the three triggers recognized worldwide were present in the case of IPF in Israel in general and among Ethiopians in particular, as described below.

Desire by the Wife to End Relations and Separate

This trigger has been reported in the empirical research literature as the principal factor in IPF (Morash et al., 2007). Ethiopian women have learned in acculturation that they can gain considerably by separation or divorce from their husbands: Israel offers some financial reliefs and benefits to the single mother. Separation from a violent husband, whereby the wife ceases to be victim to his abuse, can serve as a serious trigger for a lethal response on the husband's part even if he has no history of violent behavior. Men who need their wives are in a position of considerable inferiority and dependence, to the extent of feeling at a loss without them due to their insufficient knowledge of Hebrew, unemployment, and lack of acculturation to Israeli society. When the woman desires a separation, some men feel that their worst nightmares have come true: they will remain alone, and the wife will receive custody of the children, leaving them bereft of their families and with no proper means of subsistence being required to pay alimony. The sense of abandonment is severe (Kacen, 2006; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Edelstein, 2011; Kacen & Keidar, 2006).

Another chauvinistic aspect is the death knell sounded to the man's control over his spouse. This is perceived as the loss of absolute power and a shattering of the male self-image in certain men. Dependence and

the fear of abandonment in some men and/or a sense of having lost male control and dominance in others have led to 59% of the IPF cases in the Ethiopian community (Edelstein, 2011). Men who felt an existential threat in the wake of the wife's desire for a separation preferred to commit suicide following the wife's murder based on irrational thoughts around commemorating or ending the alliance for good (Morash et al., 2007). Edelstein (2011) found that about half of Ethiopian men who had committed IPF tried to and/or succeeded in ending their lives. Some of the murder cases could have been prevented if the traditional institutions, such as the elders of the community and the Kes, had existed. It is reasoned that these institutions would have ruled in favor of divorce in the case of an abusive husband, and the husband would not have experienced a loss of control and dominance since the separation was not forced upon him by his wife but by key religious figures authorized to rule in such cases.

Sexual Jealousy

According to data analysis, this trigger is second crucial in the Ethiopian community (Edelstein, 2011). Sexual jealousy is associated with the husband's dominance over the wife in terms of intimate relations, such that it could also be considered a component of the first trigger. The man's dominance over the woman stems from both his exclusive rights over her and objectification of the woman as the man's property and his property alone. At the same time, it may be argued that the greater the person's self-confidence and self-image, the less severely he will experience sexual jealousy.

When the Ethiopian male in Israel feels his self-image is being threatened and his self-esteem eroded so substantially in the face of the processes described, he tries to maintain his dominance and ownership over his wife as a last resort in preserving his self-regard. At times, Ethiopian men with a low self-image (in many cases unemployed) will sit and wait for their wives when they are at work or are out on errands. Women are sometimes required to work overtime and are delayed in returning home; certain husbands are then liable to imagine their wives meeting up with a better man employed and involved socially. With some men, the loss of control over their wives, together with a high or absolute dependence on them, could lead to extreme situations in which they suspect infidelity. Research has found that 37% of the incidents of IPF in the Ethiopian community were perpetrated against the backdrop of sexual jealousy (11 of 30 women). In the overwhelming majority of cases, there was no factual basis for such a suspicion. Murder due to a suspicion of infidelity is a manifestation of the male perception that "if she cannot be mine, she cannot be anyone else's" (Edelstein, 2011).

Disputes and Complaints to the Police About an Abusive Husband

This trigger is third in importance and results from the willingness of women to complain to the police and welfare authorities about their husbands or escalating disputes. The violent man does not feel he is committing an offense since he has not yet begun his acculturation process (Qusey & Kurbin, 2018; Sela-Shayovitz, 2010; Sellin, 1938). From his point of view, he is acting normatively in terms of his home culture. This may be likened to the Sicilian father who murders his daughter following immigration to the USA for bringing dishonor to the family after associating with a man (Qusey & Kurbin, 2018).

The Ethiopian woman who is a victim of abuse from her husband cannot avail herself of the responsive help she once had in her home culture. She cannot flee to her birth family due to the physical distance involved and the crowded living conditions. At the same time, she also cannot approach the elders of the community since the traditional semi-legal means of settling disputes has not gained state approval and even stands in

opposition to the formal institutions in Israel. Ethiopian women who have undergone acculturation or are in the throes of the process have adopted the norms of Israeli society and are accustomed to consulting with Israeli women, particularly those belonging to the welfare services. Some understand that lodging a complaint with the police or escaping to a shelter for battered women could, paradoxically enough, intensify the violence against her in the final analysis. This is due to the concern regarding a severe injury to the honor and reputation of the man: family members and neighbors observe police officers approaching the house, following which the man is at times taken for interrogation.

Some Ethiopian women still try to maintain the honor of the community by adhering to the cultural norm, which states that dirty linen must not be aired in public. For this reason, only a small percentage (13%, 4 out of 30) of Ethiopian women lodge formal complaints against abusive husbands with the welfare services or the police, the assumption being that the number of battered wives is much higher (Edelstein, 2011; Kacen & Keidar, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2005; Kacen, 2006). Intense anger or a feeling that he no longer has anything to lose can induce a lethal reaction in a man, including the murder of his wife on knowing that she had complained, even following his detention or imprisonment.

The existence of semi-legal institutions—elders of the community and Kes—can prevent occurrences such as the above. The rationale is that instead of dishonoring the man and the community by airing dirty linen in public, the mechanisms for settling disputes within the community (the elders) could be tapped; these would demand that the man cease his violent behavior, even ensuring that he does through a guarantor and guarantee.

The Collapse of Traditional Semi-Legal Mechanisms for Settling Disputes in Israel

Following the presentation of the explanations for the murder of Ethiopian wives in Israel, the central question in this article needs to be addressed, namely: to what extent, if at all, does a correlation exist between the disappearance of traditional institutions for settling disputes between spouses and IPF in the Ethiopian community? Alternatively, it may be suggested that the continued existence of these institutions could lessen the number of cases of IPF.

As stated, in Ethiopia, women were in danger of becoming victims of violence from the husband daily. Any deviation on the part of the wife from strict gender roles could be grounds for abuse. Apart from physical violence, however, the patriarchal culture also used a form of mental abuse. It did not allow the wife to share her problems with anyone other than the elders of the community and the Kes because no slander must touch the husband.

Nevertheless, even if the woman is considered the husband's property, he cannot do as pleases. Just as the legitimization of "educational" violence towards the wife is clearly defined in social rules, so too is a deviation from these norms given due consideration on the legal or semi-legal level. Two critical criteria have been determined in the Ethiopian Jewish community for outlawing violence towards a woman on the part of her husband: recurrent violence in the form of obsessive outbursts of anger and violence towards the wife that is life-threatening (Dolev-Gendelman, 1989).

It is only in the face of violence of the above types that the woman could seek help from the semi-legal institutions, whose role was to maintain social order. Any deviation on the part of the husband was handled officially and authoritatively. This was an efficient supervision mechanism for settling disputes, whether by way of compromise or divorce. It is unknown to what extent the community's elders constituted an objective entity, namely, one that showed no partiality towards the husband or his interests. It is also possible that a man

could threaten his wife into not approaching the community's elders once again with her case. Nevertheless, the mere knowledge on the wife's part that there was someone to turn to in case of trouble gave her a sense of security.

It is assumed that the men accepted the verdict of the elders of the community and the Kes concerning any settlement, based on the respect for their higher position in the hierarchy and the authority traditionally bestowed upon them. The fact remains that there has not to date been a single case of IPF among the Jewish population in Ethiopia before their immigration to Israel (Edelstein, 2011).

In contrast to the status held by the elders of the community and the Kes in Ethiopia, their power and authority have been undermined to a great extent on immigration to Israel. The Kes, like all other male immigrants from Ethiopia, were required to immerse themselves in the *mikveh* and perform the ritual of bloodletting to be formally recognized as Jews. In addition, the Kes was not recognized by the Chief Rabbinate as authorized to act in marital affairs. The elders of the community lost their prestige and importance for the simple reason that they tried to maintain a social order that contrasted with the religious school of thought, the norms, and even the law prevailing in the Israeli establishment: as a civilized country, Israel recognizes the fact that when a man beats his wife, intervention should not be sought from a traditional institution but rather from the formal institutions of the country, such as the police, the welfare services, and the rabbinical court of law (Ben-Ezer, 1992). A research study conducted by Kaplan and Sharabi (2013) shows that the role of the Kes diminished in scope following immigration to Israel due to the negative attitude they received to their legitimacy and authority from the religious establishment. Regarding the nature of men-women relations, the study presents the difficulties encountered by Ethiopian men in assuming roles that were considered feminine, such as raising children, cooking, and cleaning. Thus their situation in Israel took a turn for the worse relative to their situation in Ethiopia.

However, whereas men have been in favor of preserving the norms of the home culture, which were beneficial to their status, women have preferred the norms prevalent in Israeli society—including, in each case, the customs and institutions for settling disputes (Bodovsky, David, Eran, & Baruch, 1993). The men's interest in maintaining a patriarchal culture would lead them of necessity to demand that the status of the elders of the community also be preserved, as in the old country. This would grant them the legitimacy to use force vis-à-vis their wives, who were contesting the existing order. On the other hand, from the point of view of the Ethiopian women, a return to the mode of approaching the elders of the community or the Kes during times of trouble would deal a blow to rights that they had learned about in Israel. These women have thus preferred to approach the formal establishment in Israel instead of the traditional institutions of the home culture (Bodovsky et al., 1993).

Given this state of affairs, the semi-legal institution of the elders of the community lost its importance as an agency for settling disputes between spouses. Although no research has been conducted on the subject in recent years, Bodovsky et al. (1993) described an attempt to maintain the institution of the community's elders in marital affairs. A procedure was initiated in Israel in 1989, according to which members of the Ethiopian community who appeal to the rabbinical court of law are referred to the community's elders for further action. The elders of the community are engaged in several principal areas: domestic harmony if one of the partners wishes to divorce and where the court believes that domestic harmony can be achieved; consensual divorce; and a desire for divorce on the part of one of the spouses whereas the other is opposed to it. It is interesting to note that some of the cases were transferred by social workers directly to the community's elders before the

couple's appeal to the rabbinical court. In addition, many elders are occupied as mediations between Ethiopian couples (Kaduri, 2020). Bodovsky et al. (1993) research showed to what extent Ethiopian women have learned to approach the formal institutions in Israel—the rabbinical court or the welfare services. The research found that women made 70% of the applications to the court, 61% of which demanded a divorce and/or alimony from the husband. To prevent stigmatization, there aren't data up to date according to the origin, but we have reason to believe that the data didn't change a lot because of the empowerment of Ethiopian women in Israel. Another important finding is related to domestic harmony. It was found that most of the dossiers reaching the elders of the community in connection with domestic harmony were handled between them and the couple on an ongoing basis, and a long-term agreement was reached, with a return to the rabbinical court being avoided.

In 2003, to deal with the growing violence between spouses in Israel, it was decided to establish municipal mediation centers. This framework also included traditional mediators (Shmagluch) from the Ethiopian community to intervene with members of the Ethiopian community. In a study that examined the work of the elders in Israel, and based on depth interviews with 15 elders, findings showed the erosion that had taken place in the status of the elders in Israel, with members of the community less inclined to submit to their authority (Sharabi, 2013). At the same time, the findings also show that the Ethiopians preferred the mediation process to be carried out through them since it was rapid, less complicated, more economical, and more effective than the process in the Israeli legal system. The problem is that although in 2003, the state began to implement the traditional mediation institution of the elders for them to help in absorbing new immigrants and coping with family and cultural issues, it does not recognize the entity formally so that they do not enjoy the rights of government employees. Their remuneration is not commensurate with their contribution (Nugget, 2006).

Conclusions

One of the conclusions derived from the present analysis is that when Ethiopians married couple seeks domestic harmony, the community's elders can still serve as essential mediators. It is nevertheless possible that some of the appeals for domestic harmony stem from the misgivings that Ethiopian women have in turning to the police with a complaint about their husbands. Another conclusion is that when the woman wants a divorce, she will prefer to go to court rather than appeal to the community's elders. Thus, more Ethiopian women than men prefer to apply to the formal institutions in Israeli society, whereas the men prefer the traditional institution of the community's elders.

Is the Collapse of Traditional Institutions for Settling Disputes Responsible for IPF in the Ethiopian Community?

The claim the collapse of traditional institutions for settling disputes is responsible for IPF in the Ethiopian community has been raised more than once at conferences and symposiums. The basis for this claim is simple: in the home country, there were no instances of IPF thanks to the existence of traditional institutions for settling disputes. Feldman, author of the book *Ethiopian Exodus* (1998), claims that men called violence against women in Ethiopia—women's education. The community accepted it—as long as it did not end in murder. The collapse of these institutions is solely or mainly responsible for IPF in the Ethiopian community in Israel. The proof is the overwhelming cases of IPF among the Ethiopians, standing in disproportion to their percentage of the population and the number of IPF cases in Israeli society.

The above facts represent an oversimplification and are not given to empirical verification. It should be borne in mind that most Ethiopian men do not murder their wives. The theoretical-empirical model that explains this behavior associates it with social and cultural changes and relates to a range of mental disturbances in the murderers (Edelstein, 2011). It is not possible to compare the effectiveness of the traditional mechanism for settling disputes and supervision of the husband in the culture of a small village and life in modern society. In contemporary society, members of the Ethiopian community are exposed to a diversity of situations, crises, and events they were not exposed to in the home culture. Thanks to the social means of supervision in Ethiopia, based on the patriarchal family, there was no case in which the woman left her village home in the morning for work, leaving the husband behind, fearing that she would consort with other men (Bitton & Weil, 2018; Weil, 2004).

The above shows the changes that members of the Ethiopian community have undergone in Israel, including their profound implications, manifested, among other things, in IPF. The reversal of gender roles and status, the undermining of self-continuance among men, and the formal punitive measures in place for abusive men have contributed to developing the disturbing IPF phenomenon. Far-reaching psychological issues due to the migration and encounters with a different culture have taken their toll on some Ethiopian males, causing anger, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

The principal advantage in the work undertaken by the elders in Israel is in the domain of culture. They speak the immigrants' language, are familiar with the cultural codes, and handle affairs using recognizable methods (Sharabi, 2013). The role of a cultural go-between is to act as a mediator between two cultures that represent different ways and perspectives in achieving a common goal. This role developed in the Ethiopian community and answered the community's needs and the needs of the establishment (Shemer & Bar-Guy, 2001). The intention is to use cultural bridging for married couples without the need to involve formal entities.

One of the recommendations deriving from this analysis is that empowerment of the community's elders in settling disputes between couples could contribute to reducing IPF. It is not a question of using modern intervention through a traditional mechanism but rather of leveraging the traditional mechanism, with its proven effectiveness, to settle disputes after adapting it with due sensitivity to everyday life. As an example, the elders of the community can participate in culture-oriented mediation courses, thereby continuing to serve as a relevant address for both men and women. An additional recommendation is acceptance of the elders' framework, if only partially, as an integral part of the existing mechanisms in place, thus granting it official validity and restoring the status of the elders of the community in the eyes of the community, including its younger members, as well as in the eyes of the formal state institutions.

In conclusion, it is essential to remember that the elders of the community and the Kes, like the law enforcement and legal system, protect women from absolute authority exercised by men. In light of the empowerment of Ethiopian women in Israel, it is no longer confident that they would want to return to the informal frameworks that dominated the home culture. Even the assumption that men would accept the ruling of the elders of the community and the Kes in settling disputes without exacting revenge on their wives appears at present to be unrealistic.

References

- Barhani, Z. (1990). Family and community life of the Jews in Ethiopia and in the transition to Israel. In D. Bodovsky, Y. Eran, and E. Yehiel (Eds.), *Issues in treating families from a different cultural background* (pp. 5-16). Jerusalem: Beit-Achin. (in Hebrew)

- Ben-Ezer, G. (1992). *Like light in a pitcher*. Tel Aviv: Reuven Mas Publishers. (in Hebrew)
- Benita, R. (2017). *Murder and attempted murder of women against the backdrop of violence in the family*. Knesset Research and Information Center. (in Hebrew)
- Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2007). Health disparities and violence against women: Why and how cultural and societal influences matter. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 8(2), 90-104.
- Bitton, Y., & Weil, S. (2018). Israel. In S. Weil, C. Corradi, and M. Naudi (Eds.), *Femicide across Europe: Theory, research, and prevention* (pp. 120-122). UK: Bristol University Press.
- Bodovsky, D., Eran, Y., & Yehiel, E. (1990). *Issues in treating families from a different cultural background*. Jerusalem: Beit-Achin. (in Hebrew)
- Bodovsky, D., Yosef, D., & Yehiel, E. (1992). *Family issues in Ethiopian Jewry*. Jerusalem: Beit-Achin, Joint, and Amishav. (in Hebrew)
- Bodovsky, D., David, Y., Eran, Y., & Baruch, E. (1993). *Review of mediation activities by the Shmagluch (elders of the community) of Beit-Achin among Ethiopian Jews*. Unpublished. (in Hebrew)
- Bodovsky, D., David, Y., & Ronen, H. (1994). *The family and life cycles of Ethiopian Jews in intercultural transition*. Jerusalem: Bet-Achin, Publication No. 5. (in Hebrew)
- Bornstein, M. H., & Cote, L. R. (2014). *Handbook of cultural development science*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Brekke, I. (2013). How do husbands affect the labor market participation of majority and immigrant women? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(10), 1639-1657.
- Campbell, J. C. (2007). Prediction of homicide of and by battered women. In J. C. Campbell (Ed.), *Assessing dangerousness: Violence by batterers and child abusers* (Ch. 5). New York: Springer Publishing.
- Campbell, J. C., Glass, N., Sharps, P. W., Laughon, K., & Bloom, T. (2007). Intimate partner homicide: Review and implications of research and policy. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 8(3), 246-269.
- Carrillo, R., & Zarza, M. J. (2006). An intervention model for Latino perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Proceedings from VII Congreso Internacional De Desastres. Havana, Cuba.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *The population of Ethiopian origin in Israel—Compendium of data on the occasion of the Sigd Festival*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2u6jxIk> (in Hebrew)
- David, Y., Bodovsky, D., & Eran, Y. (1989). *Domestic harmony and disputes between couples—Family issues*. Jerusalem: Beit-Achin, Publication No. 1. (in Hebrew)
- Dolev-Gendelman, Z. (1989). *Ethiopian Jews in Israel families' pictures*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University.
- Edelstein, A. (2000). Social delinquency and perversion patterns among immigrant youths from Ethiopia in Israel (Thesis for award of Ph.D. degree, Institute of Criminology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem). (in Hebrew)
- Edelstein, A. (2011). *Intimate partner femicide in Israel: Theoretical and empirical aspects*. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Publications. (in Hebrew)
- Edelstein, A. (2013). Culture transition, acculturation and intimate partner homicide. *SpringerPlus*, 2, 338-362.
- Edelstein, A. (2014). Intimate partner femicide against Ethiopian women in Israel. In E. Witztum and N. Grisaru (Eds.), *Social, cultural and clinical aspects of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel* (pp. 249-278). Ben-Gurion University Press.
- Feldman, M. (1998). *Ethiopian exodus*. The Bialik Institute. (In Hebrew)
- Finkelstein, M., & Salomon, Z. (2007). Exposure to cumulative trauma and its impact on Ethiopian immigrants. *Society and Welfare*, 20, 129-157. (in Hebrew)
- Gal, N. (2003). *Violence against women—Norm or perversion?* Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad Publishers. (in Hebrew)
- Garcia, L., Soria, C., & Hurwitz, E. L. (2007). Homicides and intimate partner violence. A literature review. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 8(4), 370-383.
- Haviv, G., Halben-Eilat, H., Shatz, A., & Almog, Y. (2010). *Monitoring of key indicators for the condition of the Ethiopian population*. Jerusalem: Brookdale Institute and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. (in Hebrew)
- Herzog, A. (1998). *Bureaucracy and immigrants from Ethiopia*. Tel Aviv: Charikover. (in Hebrew)
- Israel Police. (2011). *Crime in Israel 2010*. Jerusalem: Matar. (in Hebrew)
- Jin, X., & Keat, J. E. (2010). The effects of change in spousal power on intimate partner violence among Chinese immigrants. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(4), 610-625.
- Kacen, L. (2006). Spousal abuse among immigrants from Ethiopia in Israel. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(5), 1276-1290.
- Kacen, L., & Keidar, L. (2006). *Violence between married couples among Ethiopian families in Israel*. Jerusalem: Joint-Brookdale Institute. (in Hebrew)

- Kaduri, A. (2020). *Ethiopian elders as mediators*. Israeli Authority for Community Security.
- Kaplan, A., & Sharabi, R. (2013). The elderly from Ethiopia in the intercultural transition in Israel. *Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 40(2-3), 49-78. (in Hebrew)
- Kim, I. J., Lau, A. S., & Chang, D. F. (2007). Family violence among Asian Americans. In F. T. L. Leong, A. Ebreo, L. Kinoshita, A. G. Inman, L. H. Yang, and M. Fu (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian American psychology* (pp. 363-378). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Klevens, J. (2007). An overview of intimate partner violence among Latinos. *Violence Against Women*, 13(2), 111-122.
- Kogan, R., & Moola, D. (2005). *Community policing for the new immigrant population*. Community and Civil Guard, Community Policing Department. (in Hebrew)
- Lee, Y. S., & Hadeed, L. (2009). Intimate partner violence among Asian immigrant communities: Health/Mental health consequences, help-seeking behaviors, and service utilization. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10(2), 143-170.
- Martin, P. P., & Hollifield, J. (2014). *Controlling immigration: A global perspective*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Morash, M., Bui, H., Zhang, Y., & Holtfreter, K. (2007). Risk factors for abusive relationships: A study of Vietnamese American immigrant women. *Violence Against Women*, 13(7), 653-675.
- National Insurance Institute. (2018). *Annual report*. Israel Government.
- Nugget, Y. (2006). Intervention perceptions and understanding of the Shmagluch in processes of dispute in the Ethiopian community (Thesis for the award of MA degree, Bar-Ilan University). (in Hebrew)
- Ponizovsky, A. M., & Grinshpoon, A. (2009). Mood and anxiety disorders and the use of services and psychopathic medication in an immigrant population: Findings from the Israel National Health Survey. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54(6), 409-419.
- Ponizovsky, A., Ginath, Y., Durst, R., Wondimeneh, B., Safro, S., Minuchin-Itzigson, S., & Ritsner, M. (1998). Psychological distress among Ethiopian and Russian Jewish immigrants to Israel: A cross-cultural study. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 44(1), 35-45.
- Qusey, G. C., & Kurbin, C. (2018). Immigration and crime. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1, 6-84.
- Raj, A., & Silverman, J. (2002). Violence against immigrant women. *Violence Against Women*, 8(3), 367-398.
- Rodriguez, M., Valentine, J. M., & Muhammad, M. (2009). Intimate partner violence and barriers to mental health care for ethnically diverse populations of women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10(4), 358-374.
- Salmon, H. (1987). Journeying as a means of communication among beta Israel in Ethiopia. *Peamim*, 33, 109-124. (in Hebrew)
- Sela-Shayovitz, R. (2010). The role of ethnicity and context: Intimate femicide rates among social groups in Israeli society. *Violence Against Women*, 16(2), 1424-1436.
- Sellin, T. (1938). *Culture conflict and crime*. Social Research Council.
- Shabtai, M. (1999). *Hachi Achi: Ethiopian immigrant soldiers journey in search of identity*. Tel Aviv: Charikover. (in Hebrew)
- Shabtai, M., & Assael, V. (2011). *Partnerships in immigration*. The Jewish Agency. (in Hebrew)
- Shapiro-Zur, E. (2013). On the way up: The significance of professional success in the life stories of Ethiopian women (Thesis for award of MA degree, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva). (in Hebrew)
- Sharabi, R. (2013). Traditional mediators among Ethiopian immigrants in the welfare services and police force. *Israel Criminology*, 3, 149-173. (in Hebrew)
- Shemer, A. (2013). *Mediation and dialogue centres in the community: Social innovations in community initiatives*. Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Social Services. (in Hebrew)
- Shemer, A., & Bar-Guy, A. (2001). Intercultural bridging in the community. *Encounters for Educational Social Work*, 14, 167-175. (in Hebrew)
- Shimron, G. (1998). *Bring me the Jews of Ethiopia*. Hed-Artzi Publishers. (in Hebrew)
- Shoham, F. (2010). Signs of honor among Russian inmates in Israel's prisons. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 54(6), 984-1003.
- Shuval, J. T. (1979). Migration and stress. In L. Goldberger and S. Breznitz (Eds.), *Handbook of stress*. New York: Free Press.
- Sullivan, M., Senturia, K., Negash, T., Shiu-Thornton, S., & Giday, B. (2005). "For us it is like living in the dark": Ethiopian women's experiences with domestic violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 20(8), 922-940.
- Svirsky, B., & Capela, Y. (2005). *Employment among Israeli Ethiopians*. Adva Institute.
- Van Wormer, K., & Roberts, A. R. (2009). *Death by domestic violence*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Vatnar, S. K., & Bjorkly, S. (2010). An interactional perspective on the relationship of immigration to intimate partner violence in a representative sample of help-seeking women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(10), 1815-1835.

- Wallach, H. S., Weingram, Z., & Avitan, O. (2010). Attitudes toward domestic violence: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 25*(7), 1284-1297.
- Websdale, N. (1999). *Understanding domestic homicide*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Weil, S. (2004). Ethiopian Jewish women: Trends and transformations in the context of transnational change. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues, 8*, 73-86.
- Youngmann, R., Minuchin-Itzigsohn, S., & Barasch, M. (1999). Manifestations of emotional distress among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel: Patient and clinician perspectives. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 36*(1), 45-63.
- Youngmann, R., Pugachova, I., & Zilber, N. (2009). Patterns of psychiatric hospitalization among Ethiopian and Former Soviet Union immigrants and persons born in Israel. *Psychiatric Services, 60*(12), 1656-1663.
- Yu, X., Stewart, S. M., Liu, I. K. F., & Lam, T. H. (2014). Resilience and depressive symptoms in mainland Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 49*(2), 241-249.