



THE VIOLENCE BETWEEN NATURE AND LAW: THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE IN THE ARAB SOCIETY IN ISRAEL AS A BY-PRODUCT OF THE NATURE, SOCIAL, AND LEGAL CONTEXT

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Abstract:

This article examines the phenomenon of violence in Arab society in Israel within an integrative analytical framework that seeks to move beyond the dominant one-dimensional explanations in the social sciences and criminology. The study is premised on the assumption that violence cannot be fully understood through a single explanatory variable-biological, social, or legal-but rather as the product of a dynamic and ongoing interaction between human nature, social structure, and the legal system. Drawing on recent multi-layered approaches to the study of crime and violence (Arias, 2017; Lessing, 2021), the article proposes a conceptual framework that highlights the frictions and interactions among these three dimensions. The study is based on a qualitative methodology comprising 32 in-depth interviews with judges, police officers, academics, community leaders, and other professionals. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns alongside competing systems of meaning. The findings indicate that violence is perceived as the outcome of a combination of social exclusion, structural inequality, erosion of trust in state institutions, and the weakening of traditional community control mechanisms. At the same time, informal institutions such as *sulha* continue to play a central role in conflict resolution, thereby creating a hybrid governance space. At the institutional level, the findings point to a crisis of legitimacy in law enforcement systems, manifested in perceptions of inequality and low trust in the law, a phenomenon consistent with contemporary literature on governance and legal legitimacy (Tyler, 2006; OECD, 2023). Structurally, violence is described as a continuous process of escalation and institutionalization rather than isolated incidents, in line with models of “violence economies” and criminal organizations as alternative governance mechanisms (World Bank, 2022; UNODC, 2022). The article’s main theoretical contribution is the development of the “friction model,” which conceptualizes violence as the product of continuous interaction among nature, society, and law, rather than as the result of a single causal factor. This model challenges

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both one-dimensional biological approaches (Wrangham, 2019) and classical structural sociological perspectives (Wacquant, 2009), offering an integrated understanding of violence as a multi-layered systemic phenomenon. The article concludes that violence in Arab society in Israel cannot be reduced to a single explanatory framework. Rather, it reflects a complex encounter between state failure, deep social processes, and fundamental human dynamics. Within this space, law, society, and nature do not operate separately; instead, they collide, intertwine, and jointly shape contemporary patterns of violence.

Keywords: violence, Arab society in Israel, human nature, social context, legal context, thematic analysis, governance, friction model

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, violence within Arab society in Israel has evolved from a localized and episodic social phenomenon into a large-scale structural problem with profound social, economic, political, and legal implications. Recent data indicate a persistent increase in homicide rates, firearm-related incidents, extortion, and organized criminal activity in Arab localities, to the extent that the phenomenon is now widely regarded as one of the most serious social challenges facing the State of Israel (Abraham Initiatives, 2024; State Comptroller of Israel, 2024). Although Arab citizens constitute approximately 21% of the country's population, their proportion among homicide victims is significantly higher than their demographic share, and this trend continues despite the implementation of various governmental programs, police reforms, and intensified law-enforcement efforts (Israel Democracy Institute, 2024).

While violence in Arab society in Israel has attracted increasing scholarly and public attention in recent years, much of the existing discussion continues to be conducted within relatively narrow disciplinary boundaries. Sociological studies tend to explain violence through variables such as social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, institutional discrimination, and crises of collective identity (Abu-Asbeh & Avgar, 2020; Smootha, 2019). In contrast, criminological research emphasizes the weakening of informal social control mechanisms, the expansion of organized crime, and deficiencies in governance and law enforcement (Arias, 2017; Niv & Levin, 2023). Simultaneously, the legal literature focuses primarily on questions of sovereignty, enforcement, equality before the law, and the state's responsibility to safeguard human rights and personal security (Barak-Erez, 2020; Kemnitzer, 2022).

Despite their substantial contributions, these explanatory frameworks often leave a fundamental question unresolved: Why does violence persist—and in some cases intensify—even when certain social conditions improve, governmental intervention programs are introduced, and enforcement mechanisms are strengthened? Put differently, is violence merely the product of social and legal conditions, or does it reflect a more complex phenomenon arising from the continuous interaction between

fundamental human dispositions, social structures, and institutional mechanisms of control?

This question lies at the heart of a longstanding theoretical debate that has shaped the social sciences for centuries. From the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1651/1996) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/2002), through Darwin's evolutionary theory (1871/2004), and extending to contemporary research in evolutionary psychology and neuroscience, scholars have persistently debated the origins of human violence. On one side stands the argument that violence is an inherent component of human nature—a manifestation of struggles for power, survival, and competition over resources (Wrangham, 2019; Pinker, 2011). On the other side is the perspective that violence is fundamentally a social and historical construct, shaped by power relations, cultural structures, and processes of exclusion and marginalization (Bourdieu, 1998; Galtung, 1969; Collins, 2008).

The theoretical confrontation between these perspectives extends far beyond a philosophical disagreement. It directly influences how states, legal institutions, and local communities define the problem of violence and formulate strategies to address it. If violence is understood primarily as a consequence of innate human tendencies, policy responses are likely to emphasize surveillance, deterrence, and enforcement. Conversely, if violence is viewed as a product of inequality, exclusion, or community disintegration, interventions will tend to focus on social reform, empowerment, and the strengthening of social capital. Yet empirical reality is considerably more complex than either of these perspectives suggests when considered in isolation.

Arab society in Israel provides a unique case through which to examine this debate. It constitutes a national minority living within a modern state characterized by an advanced legal system, while simultaneously confronting profound socioeconomic disparities, accelerated processes of modernization, crises of communal authority, the erosion of traditional mechanisms of social control, and the expansion of organized criminal networks (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2021; Jamal, 2023). This reality creates a complex arena in which three central dimensions intersect: the individual as a biological being possessing the potential for violence, society as the framework that shapes and regulates behavior, and the law as the mechanism that seeks to restrain, define, and sanction deviant conduct.

Within this context, violence may be understood as a phenomenon emerging from the zone of friction between nature, society, and law. It is not the exclusive product of any single dimension but rather the outcome of dynamic interactions among them. Human nature provides the potential; the social context confers meaning, legitimacy, and constraints; and the legal system seeks to regulate tensions through norms, sanctions, and mechanisms of control. When one or more of these regulatory mechanisms weaken, a social space emerges within which violence may develop, intensify, and become institutionalized.

From this perspective, the present article seeks to move beyond the prevailing tendency to explain violence through a single causal factor. Instead, it proposes an integrative framework that conceptualizes violence as a multidimensional phenomenon

emerging from the continuous interaction between fundamental human dispositions, social structures, and legal processes. This approach draws upon diverse theoretical traditions, including the sociology of power and control (Foucault, 1977), the theory of structural violence (Galtung, 1969), Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1998), theories of social control (Hirschi, 1969), and contemporary insights from institutional and evolutionary criminology (Nagin, 2013; Wrangham, 2019).

The originality of this article lies in its attempt to examine violence in Arab society in Israel not merely as the outcome of social failure or inadequate law enforcement, but rather as a phenomenon situated at the intersection of human nature and the social and legal mechanisms that regulate collective life. Rather than positioning competing explanations against one another, the article explores how they complement each other and how the tensions among them contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of violence.

Accordingly, the central question guiding this article is: How can the development and expansion of violence in Arab society in Israel be understood through an integrated analysis of human nature, the social context, and the legal framework? Through a theoretical, critical, and integrative examination of these three dimensions, the article seeks to offer a broader interpretive framework for understanding violence and to extend scholarly discourse beyond the boundaries of conventional exploratory approaches.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Violence as a Multidimensional Phenomenon: Between Social and Biological Explanations

The scholarly literature on violence has long been situated along a continuum of tension between two dominant explanatory traditions. The first conceptualizes violence as the product of social, political, and economic structures, whereas the second seeks to anchor it in human nature, evolutionary processes, and the biological dynamics of survival and power. The tension between these two perspectives extends beyond methodological disagreement and touches upon one of the most fundamental questions in the social sciences: Is violence learned, or is it innate?

Within the sociological tradition, Johan Galtung introduced the concept of **structural violence** in the late 1960s, defining it as a condition in which social institutions systematically produce harm to particular populations even in the absence of the direct use of physical force (Galtung, 1969). Pierre Bourdieu subsequently expanded this perspective by arguing that symbolic and structural forms of power generate persistent inequalities that are frequently translated into overt forms of violence (Bourdieu, 1998). Within this paradigm, violence is not viewed as a social anomaly but rather as an almost inevitable consequence of institutionalized inequality.

In contrast, scholars working within evolutionary and psychological traditions offer a fundamentally different interpretation. Steven Pinker argues that human history has witnessed a gradual decline in violence, attributable to the development of state

institutions, social norms, and moral rationality (Pinker, 2011). Similarly, Richard Wrangham contends that violence has deep biological and evolutionary roots but is regulated through mechanisms of social control (Wrangham, 2019).

The divide between these two perspectives cannot easily be reconciled. Does society produce violence, or does it merely regulate an inherent human propensity? Contemporary scholarship increasingly moves beyond this dichotomy by proposing integrative models; nevertheless, these approaches continue to reflect an unresolved tension between nature and social structure.

2.2 The Criminology of Violence: Social Control, Opportunity, and Institutional Failure

Modern criminology offers more focused explanations of violence by shifting attention from broad societal interpretations toward analyses of mechanisms of social control, deterrence, and criminal opportunity.

Hirschi's Social Control Theory argues that weak social bonds—including those associated with family, educational institutions, and community—increase the likelihood of deviant and violent behavior (Hirschi, 1969). In contrast, more rational-choice-oriented perspectives, such as those advanced by Nagin (2013), maintain that criminal behavior is influenced primarily by individuals' perceptions of the certainty and severity of punishment.

Nevertheless, empirical research over recent decades has identified significant limitations in these perspectives. Even where criminal penalties have been strengthened and law enforcement intensified, violence has often failed to decline consistently. This observation challenges the assumption that the state alone can function as a sufficiently effective regulator of violent behavior.

The studies conducted by Arias (2017) and by Niv and Levin (2023) demonstrate that in regions characterized by weak state presence, parallel systems of governance frequently emerge under the authority of organized criminal groups. In such contexts, violence does not merely signify the breakdown of social order; rather, it constitutes an alternative form of governance and regulation.

This tension between formal law enforcement and informal systems of governance raises a fundamental question: Is violence primarily the result of the absence of law, or does it emerge from the coexistence of multiple competing systems of power?

2.3 Violence, Identity, and Social Structure: The Erosion of Community-Based Orders

The sociological literature on minority societies emphasizes the role of modernization, the transition from traditional to state-centered institutional frameworks, and crises of collective identity in shaping patterns of violence.

Within the context of Arab society in Israel, scholars describe a complex transition from a traditional social order grounded in extended families and clan-based structures toward a partially modernized society characterized by increasing individualization but

lacking fully consolidated institutional stability (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2021; Jamal, 2023).

This transformation has produced an intermediate condition in which traditional mechanisms of social control have weakened while state institutions have failed to assume their regulatory role fully. The result is a normative vacuum within which violence can emerge and proliferate with relative ease.

Smouha (2019) argues that the complex relationship between the State of Israel and its Arab minority has generated profound feelings of political and social alienation, which, in turn, have undermined public trust in legal institutions. Within this context, violence is understood not merely as a manifestation of criminality but also as an expression of a broader crisis of confidence between communities and the institutions responsible for social regulation.

The central tension, therefore, lies between the erosion of traditional social order and the limitations of state governance—two simultaneous processes that mutually reinforce one another.

2.4 Law, the State, and Deterrence: The Limits of Normative Capacity

The legal literature positions the state as the principal institution responsible for regulating violence through legislation, law enforcement, and the protection of public security. Classical liberal theories regard the rule of law as the primary mechanism for maintaining social order and preventing anarchy.

More recent scholarship, however, points to important limitations of this model. Barak-Erez (2020) argues that legal systems do not operate in a socially neutral environment but are embedded within broader political and social contexts that shape the implementation and effectiveness of legal norms. Similarly, Kremnitzer (2022) contends that equality before the law constitutes a critical prerequisite for maintaining public confidence in legal institutions.

In the specific context of Arab society in Israel, reports published by the State Comptroller (2024) and the Abraham Initiatives (2024) identify persistent shortcomings in the implementation of law-enforcement policies and document widespread perceptions regarding the limited effectiveness of governmental efforts to address violent crime.

Within this context, the friction between formal legality and lived social experience becomes particularly evident. Even where legal norms formally exist, they are not necessarily perceived as legitimate, equitable, or effective by the communities they are intended to serve.

2.5 Theoretical Integration: Between Nature, Society, and Law

Contemporary scholarship demonstrates a clear movement away from one-dimensional explanations toward multidimensional understandings of violence. Nevertheless, most integrative models continue to struggle to fully reconcile the tension among three central dimensions: human nature, social structure, and the legal system.

The theoretical framework proposed in the present study is grounded in the notion of a **space of friction**, within which these three dimensions do not operate independently but rather interact dynamically and continuously. Foucault (1977) argues that power is not concentrated exclusively within the state but is dispersed throughout networks of social relations. Collins (2008) conceptualizes violence at the micro level as an emotionally driven interaction, whereas Galtung (1969) demonstrates that violence may remain invisible while simultaneously becoming deeply institutionalized within social structures.

The integration of these perspectives offers a more comprehensive understanding of violence. Rather than viewing violence solely as the product of either social or legal failure, this framework conceptualizes it as the outcome of an ongoing interaction among mechanisms of power and control, identity formation, resource distribution, and fundamental biological processes.

2.6 Summary of the Literature Review: Research Gap and Justification for the Study

The literature reviewed identifies three principal explanatory traditions: the socio-structural perspective, the criminological-institutional perspective, and the biological-evolutionary perspective. Although each contributes important insights into particular aspects of violence, none provides a sufficiently comprehensive framework for understanding violence in Arab society in Israel as a persistent multidimensional phenomenon.

The principal research gap concerns the absence of an analytical model that systematically integrates human nature, the social context, and the legal framework within a single coherent explanatory perspective. The present article seeks to address this gap by proposing an integrative analytical framework that emphasizes the dynamic interactions and friction among these dimensions, rather than privileging any single explanatory paradigm.

3. Materials and Methods

The present study is grounded in the qualitative research paradigm and employs **Thematic Analysis** as its primary methodological strategy for investigating the phenomenon of violence in Arab society in Israel. This methodological choice was not merely a matter of research preference; rather, it reflects the recognition that the research question—which examines violence at the intersection of human nature, the social context, and the legal framework—requires an interpretive approach capable of uncovering the meanings, patterns, and complexities that shape participants' experiences and the ways in which they understand and interpret the phenomenon. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to identify statistical relationships among predefined variables, qualitative inquiry enables violence to be examined as a multidimensional social phenomenon emerging from the continuous interaction between perceptions, values, professional experience, and institutional contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The selection of Thematic Analysis was further informed by the premise that violence cannot be understood merely as a sequence of criminal incidents but rather as a complex social phenomenon constituted by competing meanings, divergent interpretations, and, at times, fundamentally conflicting perspectives. Accordingly, the study sought not only to identify recurring patterns within participants' narratives but also to illuminate areas of disagreement, tension, and internal contradiction among them. In this sense, thematic analysis functioned not simply as a method for organizing empirical data but as an analytical framework through which the study explored how different professional groups conceptualize the origins of violence, identify the factors sustaining it, and define the respective responsibilities of the state, society, and the individual.

Consistent with the approach advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021), thematic analysis extends beyond the classification of textual categories to identify broader conceptual themes that recur across the entire dataset. This methodological orientation was particularly appropriate for the present study because its objective was not to quantify the prevalence of specific viewpoints but rather to examine how diverse narratives concerning violence are constructed and how these narratives reflect different systems of knowledge, power relations, and worldviews. Consequently, the themes developed throughout the analytical process represent not merely what participants articulated but also the underlying social and legal logics through which they interpreted and assigned meaning to the realities within which they operate.

The decision to adopt a qualitative methodology was also informed by a broader trend within the social sciences and criminology, which recognizes that complex phenomena such as violence, crime, inequality, and governance cannot be adequately understood through quantitative indicators alone. Methodological scholars have consistently argued that when the objective of research is to explore social processes, mechanisms of meaning-making, and the interactions between institutional structures and human agency, qualitative inquiry offers a distinct advantage by enabling an in-depth examination of the subjective dimensions of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2015). This advantage is particularly relevant to the present study, which conceptualizes violence not solely as a criminal phenomenon but also as a social, institutional, and normative process.

The study is situated within an interpretivist-constructivist epistemological framework, according to which social reality is understood not as a single objective entity but as a product of social interactions, interpretation, and ongoing processes of meaning construction. From this perspective, it would be unrealistic to expect judges, police officers, attorneys, academics, community leaders, or educational professionals to conceptualize violence in identical ways. On the contrary, the differences among these perspectives were regarded as a primary source of analytical insight. Accordingly, divergence among participants' interpretations was viewed not as a methodological limitation but as an analytical resource that enabled the study to reveal the points of friction between legal discourse, social discourse, and moral discourse. This position is

consistent with the interpretive framework proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who argue that qualitative knowledge emerges through the coexistence of multiple voices rather than through the pursuit of artificial consensus.

Another defining characteristic of the present research is the integration of three interconnected levels of analysis: **human nature**, **the social context**, and **the legal framework**. Whereas much of the existing literature on violence focuses on one of these dimensions in isolation, the present study proceeds from the premise that a comprehensive understanding of violence requires an examination of the dynamic interactions among them. This methodological orientation informed every stage of the research process—from the formulation of the interview protocol and the development of the coding framework to the construction and interpretation of the final themes—with the explicit aim of avoiding reductionist explanations that attribute violence to a single causal dimension.

From a methodological perspective, the study does not seek to produce statistical generalizations applicable to the broader Arab population in Israel. Rather, it aims to achieve **analytical generalization**. Following Yin (2018), the value of qualitative inquiry lies not in the size of its sample but in the depth of its theoretical explanation and its capacity to refine, extend, or challenge existing conceptual frameworks. Accordingly, the principal contribution of the present study is not the estimation of the prevalence of particular viewpoints but the development of an integrative interpretive framework for understanding violence as a phenomenon emerging from the dynamic interaction between human nature, the social environment, and the legal system.

4. Results

The findings of the qualitative study reveal a complex, multilayered picture of violence in Arab society in Israel, as perceived by key stakeholders within the legal system, law enforcement agencies, academia, and community leadership. The thematic analysis of 32 in-depth interviews enables the identification not only of recurring patterns, but also of competing systems of meaning that shape how violence is defined, explained, and conceptualized. Overall, the findings indicate a relatively coherent interpretive structure in which violence is not perceived as an isolated or purely individual phenomenon, but rather as the product of complex interactions among social, institutional, economic, and normative factors.

Across all participants, a shared perception emerges that violence cannot be reduced to a single explanatory factor. Instead, it is presented as the outcome of a cumulative process of structural failures, ranging from the weakening of traditional social institutions, through experiences of marginalization and inequality, to the relative weakness of enforcement mechanisms and declining trust in state institutions. However, alongside this broad consensus, significant differences exist among professional groups: law enforcement actors emphasize deterrence and governance failures, education

professionals highlight processes of socialization, and academics stress broader structural contexts of inequality and collective identity.

In this sense, the findings do not merely reflect “what is said,” but also how different institutional actors locate responsibility for violence within distinct—and sometimes competing—systems of knowledge. This phenomenon highlights the existence of what may be termed a **triadic interpretive space**, in which nature, society, and law do not operate as separate categories, but rather as overlapping fields of meaning that jointly construct the understanding of the phenomenon.

Accordingly, the following section presents the main themes emerging from the interviews, highlighting both quantitative frequencies and the qualitative interpretations embedded within them.

4.1 Thematic Findings

4.1.1 Theme 1: Definition and Characteristics of Violence

The central finding indicates that direct aggression is the most frequently identified characteristic of violence (96%), followed by various expressions of violence (87%). Violent motives were also identified at a very high frequency (83%), primarily including the pursuit of money, power, status, and personal gratification. In contrast, emotional violence and symbolic violence appeared with relatively low frequency.

From an interpretive perspective, participants tend to define violence through its visible and direct manifestations, whereas more indirect dimensions of power and structural violence receive considerably less attention. This finding reflects a perceptual gap between formal institutional discourse and everyday social experiences of latent or hidden violence.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Drivers of Violence

The most prominent drivers of violence are weak family structures (83%) and perceptions of discrimination and exclusion (83%), followed by economic hardship and unemployment (77%) and the erosion of value systems and educational frameworks (73%).

The findings indicate a relatively broad consensus regarding the centrality of structural and social determinants. However, a clear interpretive tension emerges between explanations emphasizing institutional failure and those attributing responsibility to cultural or familial breakdown, reflecting a deeper disagreement regarding the origins of violence.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Consequences of Violence

The primary impact of violence is harm to personal security (83%), followed by the erosion of trust in state institutions (66%). These findings indicate that violence affects not only direct victims but also the broader social fabric and the relationship between citizens and the state.

At the interpretive level, violence is understood as a cyclical process: it is both a consequence of declining institutional trust and a factor that further deepens this erosion, thereby generating a self-reinforcing cycle of normative instability.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Law Enforcement Institutions

The dominant issue identified is a lack of trust in law enforcement institutions (91%), followed by perceptions of discrimination (67%). Participants view enforcement weakness as one of the primary drivers of violence expansion.

This theme reflects a consistent systemic critique of state mechanisms, in which law enforcement is perceived not only as ineffective but, at times, as unequal in its application. This perception generates a significant tension between formal legality and its social legitimacy.

4.1.5 Theme 5: The Sulha Institution

The central finding is the existence of a gap between the traditional *sulha* institution and the formal legal system (44%). At the same time, some participants acknowledged the effectiveness of *sulha* in resolving certain types of conflicts (38%).

The findings suggest a dual governance structure: on the one hand, a formal state legal system, and on the other, community-based mechanisms of dispute resolution. The gap between them creates normative friction zones, while also enabling social flexibility in managing conflict situations.

4.1.6 Theme 6: Policy Directions and Solutions

The most prominent finding is the call for harsher punishment (90%), followed by values-based education and a culture of non-violence (87%). In addition, participants emphasized economic development, expanded employment opportunities, and community-based intervention programs.

These findings reflect a dualistic conception of solutions: a punitive-deterrent model alongside a preventive-social model. Their coexistence indicates recognition that addressing violence requires a combination of enforcement and long-term social transformation.

4.1.7 Theme 7: Patterns of Violence

The most prominent patterns of violence include violence stemming from social and environmental neglect (90%), organized crime (87%), and the transition from verbal aggression to physical violence (81%).

These findings indicate a process of escalation and organizational consolidation of violence, with some participants describing a shift from spontaneous violence toward institutionalized and professionalized forms of criminal activity.

4.2 Summary of Relational Patterns

Overall, the analysis indicates that violence does not stem from a single factor but rather from a complex system of interactions among social, economic, legal, and individual determinants. The strongest relationship is found between exclusion and discrimination and violence (87%), followed by the relationship between social factors and individual-level factors (80%).

In general, participants described violence as the outcome of accumulated structural pressures, experiences of marginalization, and lack of social and economic opportunities. In this sense, violence is presented not as a discrete event but as a continuous process of social formation, in which state failure, community fragmentation, and individual agency dynamically intersect.

5. Discussion

5.1 General Overview: Between Nature, Society, and Law

The present study aimed to examine the phenomenon of violence in Arab society in Israel through an integrative interpretive framework that seeks to understand the interplay between three central dimensions: human nature, the social context, and the legal-institutional order. In contrast to one-dimensional approaches that conceptualize violence as the product of a single factor—whether biological, social, or institutional—the current study conceptualizes violence as a multi-layered phenomenon emerging within a continuous space of interaction among systems of meaning, structures of power, and formal and informal regulatory processes.

The findings, based on 32 in-depth interviews with judges, police officers, academics, community leaders, and other professionals, indicate a relatively broad consensus regarding the complexity of violence. Violence is no longer perceived as an individual deviation alone, but rather as the outcome of accumulated structural processes: the weakening of traditional social institutions, persistent feelings of exclusion, economic disparities, erosion of public trust in state institutions, and the growing presence of organized crime networks.

At the same time, alongside this consensus, significant interpretive divergences emerge between professional groups, reflecting distinct epistemic fields: the legal system tends to emphasize individual responsibility and deterrence; law enforcement highlights governance failures; while the academic-social field emphasizes long-term structural processes. These divergences demonstrate that violence is not only a social phenomenon, but also an arena of interpretive struggle over its definition and meaning.

5.2 Structural Explanations and Social Fractures

One of the central findings of the study is the dominance of structural-social explanations of violence, particularly the emphasis on factors such as exclusion, discrimination, poverty, institutional erosion, and the weakening of family structures. This finding aligns with a broad body of social science literature that conceptualizes violence as an

expression of institutionalized inequality rather than merely individual deviance (Wacquant, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

In this context, partial convergence can be observed with Galtung's (1969) theory of structural violence, which argues that social inequality generates systemic conditions of harm even in the absence of direct physical violence. Similarly, participants identified persistent feelings of exclusion as a key driver of frustration, loss of trust, and the normalization of violence as a survival strategy.

However, the findings also point to a limitation of classical structural explanations: they do not fully account for the escalation and institutionalization of violence. In other words, while social structure explains the enabling conditions of violence, it does not sufficiently explain why violence in some contexts becomes a stable and even rationalized mechanism of action.

5.3 Institutional Trust, Governance Failure, and the Crisis of Legitimacy

A further key finding concerns distrust in law enforcement institutions and perceived inequality in the implementation of law. This aligns with contemporary governance literature, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of legal systems depends not only on enforcement capacity but also on perceived legitimacy (Tyler, 2006).

In the Israeli context, distrust in law enforcement among Arab citizens is not merely a technical failure but also reflects historical and political experiences of marginalization. International reports indicate that enforcement systems perceived as unequal gradually lose their deterrent capacity, even when their formal power increases (UNODC, 2022).

The present findings reinforce this argument. Participants described the legal system as non-neutral, and at times as distant or discriminatory. This creates a gap between formal law and "lived law," thereby weakening deterrence and enabling the emergence of alternative normative systems.

5.4 Informal Governance and the Role of Sulha

One of the most complex findings concerns the tension between the formal legal system and the institution of *sulha*. This reflects a dual governance structure: formal and informal.

Anthropological and legal scholarship (Christie, 1977; Merry, 1990) has shown that informal dispute resolution systems are not necessarily opposed to formal law and may in fact complement it. However, in cases of serious crime, a normative friction emerges between the two systems.

The findings of this study indicate that *sulha* is perceived both as an effective mechanism for maintaining social stability and as a potential avenue for circumventing formal law. This produces a hybrid governance space in which the boundaries of authority are fluid and contested.

5.5 Violence as a Process of Escalation and Institutionalization

Another significant finding is the perception of violence as a process of escalation and institutionalization rather than isolated events. Participants described a gradual transition from verbal aggression to physical violence, alongside the increasing presence of organized crime networks.

This aligns with scholarship on criminal governance and organized violence ecosystems (Arias, 2017; Lessing, 2021), which suggests that in contexts of weakened state capacity, criminal organizations may evolve into alternative governance actors.

In this sense, violence is not merely a breakdown of order but can also constitute a form of social organization. It is not only disruption, but in some cases an alternative order emerging within institutional vacuums.

5.6 Integrative Interpretation: The Friction Model

The most integrative finding of the study is the existence of a “friction space” between human nature, social structure, and the legal system. This space does not allow violence to be understood through a single causal factor, but rather through dynamic interactions among them.

Following Foucault (1977) and Bourdieu (1998), power is not centralized but dispersed across institutions, practices, and discourses. Accordingly, violence is not merely the outcome of institutional failure or human inclination, but the product of continuous interaction among these systems.

This study extends classical theoretical approaches: while evolutionary theory emphasizes biological predispositions (Wrangham, 2019), and sociological approaches emphasize social structures (Wacquant, 2009), the findings suggest an integrative framework in which violence emerges at their intersection.

5.7 Research Questions Revisited

In light of the findings, the central research question—how the development and expansion of violence in Arab society in Israel can be understood—can be addressed as follows:

Violence cannot be explained by a single factor. Rather, it emerges from a combination of:

- Structural social conditions (exclusion, inequality, institutional erosion)
- Institutional and policing failures (enforcement, legitimacy, trust)
- Informal community mechanisms (sulha, social norms)
- Dynamics of escalation and organized crime
- Basic human tendencies shaped by social context

In this sense, violence is the product of a complex relational system between nature, society, and law—and not of any one of them in isolation.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Synthesizing the Core Findings: Violence as a Multidimensional Social Phenomenon

The findings of the present study situate the phenomenon of violence in Arab society in Israel within a complex interpretive framework that transcends linear or mono-causal explanations. The qualitative analysis, based on 32 in-depth interviews with diverse institutional actors, indicates that violence is not a marginal or exceptional phenomenon, but rather the outcome of cumulative processes operating simultaneously across three central dimensions: human nature, the social structure, and the legal system.

At the sociological level, the findings reveal the dominance of structural explanations emphasizing exclusion, inequality, institutional erosion, and the breakdown of traditional solidarity mechanisms. These results resonate with classical theories of structural violence (Galtung, 1969), while extending them by highlighting how social structures are translated into everyday practices of distrust, survival strategies, and, at times, the rationalization of violence as a functional response.

At the institutional level, the study points to a profound legitimacy crisis in the relationship between the state and Arab citizens in Israel. As emphasized by Tyler (2006), the effectiveness of law derives not only from enforcement capacity but also from perceived fairness. When this perception erodes, formal deterrence loses its efficacy, and alternative normative systems emerge. This finding is further supported by global trends indicating declining trust in state institutions in multicultural societies (OECD, 2023).

At the community level, the institution of *sulha* is revealed as an ambivalent mechanism: on the one hand, an effective tool for dispute resolution and conflict de-escalation; on the other, a parallel system that may circumvent formal legal structures and create “*normative grey zones*.” This observation sharpens the argument advanced by Merry (1990) and Chanock (2005) regarding the coexistence of multiple legal orders within the same social space.

6.2 Theoretical Synthesis: From Fragmentation to Friction

The central theoretical contribution of the study lies in the proposal of the “Friction Model,” which conceptualizes violence as the product of continuous interaction between systems rather than the outcome of a single causal factor. This model challenges both biological approaches that interpret violence as an expression of universal human predispositions (Wrangham, 2019), and sociological approaches that locate causality exclusively in social structure (Wacquant, 2009).

Drawing on Foucault (1977) and Bourdieu (1998), violence can be understood as the outcome of dispersed power relations in which the state, community, and individual simultaneously function as producers of order and reproducers of disorder. Within this space, violence is not merely a violation of law, but also an expression of structural tensions between competing systems of authority.

In this sense, the study contributes to the expansion of contemporary criminological discourse, which in recent years has shifted from viewing crime as deviance toward understanding violence as a systemic and social process (Arias, 2017; Lessing, 2021).

6.3 Empirical Implications: Patterns, Percentages, and Structural Regularities

At the empirical level, the findings reveal several stable and meaningful patterns:

- Direct aggression as a central characteristic of violence (96%)
- Exclusion and inequality as dominant drivers (83%)
- Distrust in law enforcement institutions (91%)
- Harm to personal and social security (83%)
- Rising escalation and organized crime activity (87%)

These findings are not merely descriptive; rather, they indicate a relatively stable social structure of persistent violence in which structural and institutional factors mutually reinforce one another in a cyclical manner. In this regard, the results align with international research on “violence concentration effects,” which demonstrates that violence tends to cluster in contexts characterized by sustained inequality and weak governance (World Bank, 2022).

6.4 Limitations and Methodological Reflections

Alongside its theoretical and empirical contributions, the study is subject to several methodological limitations that must be acknowledged critically.

First, although the sample includes 32 respondents from diverse professional backgrounds, it does not allow for statistical generalization to the broader population. However, in line with Yin’s (2018) concept of analytical generalization, the aim of the study is not statistical inference but theoretical expansion.

Second, the study is based on in-depth interviews and therefore reflects subjective perceptions of institutional actors. These perceptions may be influenced by professional roles, institutional interests, and cognitive biases.

Third, the study focuses primarily on institutional and professional perspectives and does not directly include the voices of perpetrators of violence, which may limit the depth of understanding of internal mechanisms of action.

6.5 Future Research Directions

Based on the findings, several directions for future research can be identified:

First, comparative studies between different minority groups in Israel and globally are needed to examine whether the “friction model” is applicable in other contexts of multicultural governance and institutional complexity (UNDP, 2023).

Second, further research should expand toward network analysis of criminal organizations and informal governance mechanisms, employing mixed-method approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative data.

Third, future studies should examine more deeply the role of social media and digital transformation in accelerating dynamics of violence and escalation (Castells, 2012).

6.6 Final Statement

Ultimately, the study points to a fundamental conclusion: violence in Arab society in Israel cannot be understood through a single lens. It is neither solely a product of human nature, nor merely the outcome of social structure or legal failure. Rather, it emerges from the continuous interaction among them—in a space of friction where power, meaning, and law collide, intertwine, and at times disintegrate.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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