

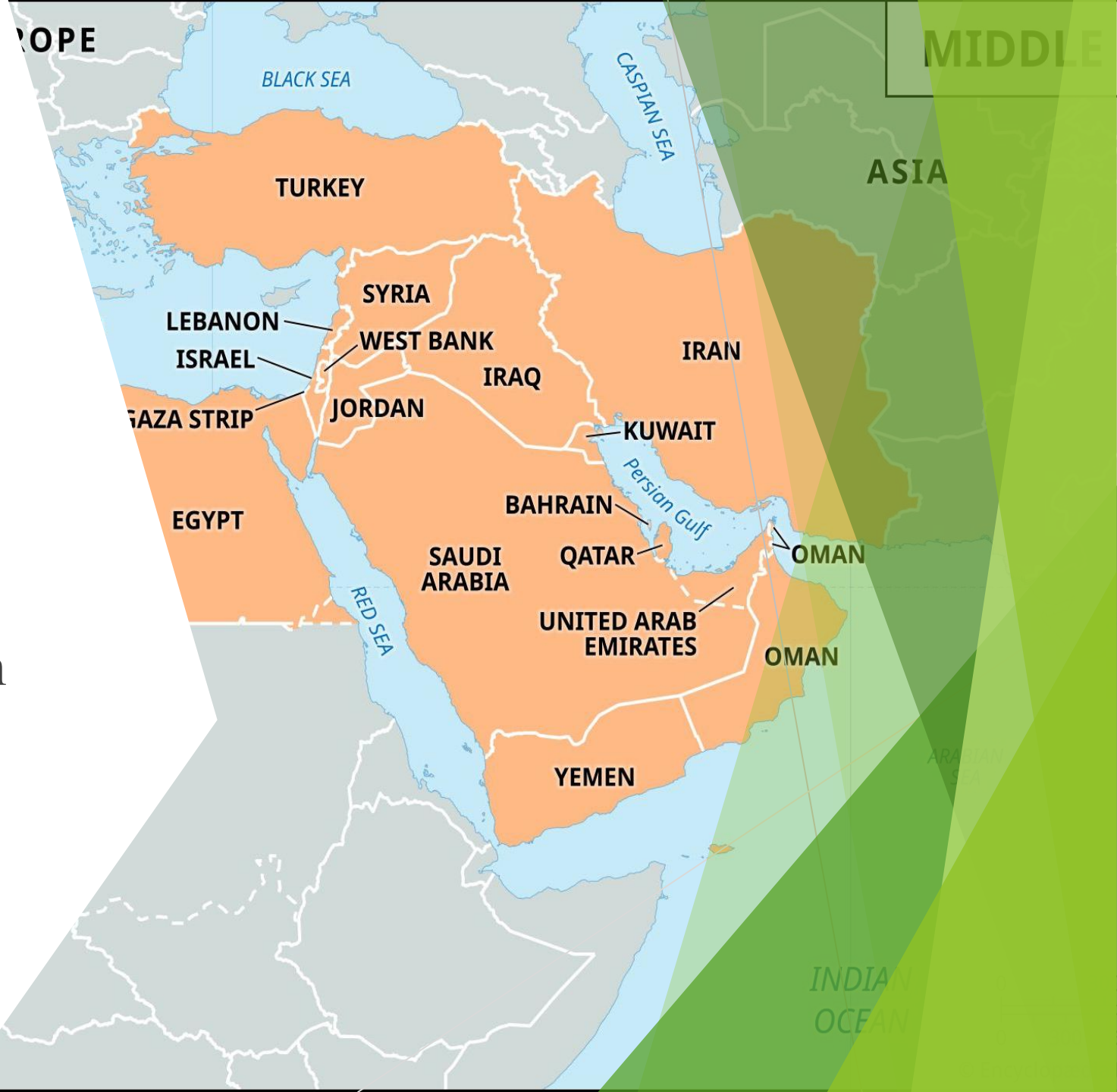


# Cross-country Analysis of Women's Participation in the Labor Force and Political Representation in Middle East

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# Introduction

- ▶ Women have had limited access to economy and polity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for decades, even in countries with more modern legislations and institutions women participation has been limited due to traditions, patriarchal and inegalitarian culture.



## Introduction Cont.

- ▶ Women in MENA are doing worse in terms of political, and socio-economic indicators than any other parts of the world, even compared to developing countries.
- ▶ Gender gaps in the region has been exacerbated post-Arab spring despite all efforts of civil societies and legal reforms.
- ▶ The gender gaps have increased in the past decade due to political instability, inter-state wars, domestic conflicts, and civil wars.

## Introduction Cont.

- ▶ The female labor force participation in the MENA region is the lowest in the world and has remained so for several decades. The economic participation of women in Middle East is 33.3 percent compared to 55.6 percent in the world. In addition, women in the region only own 17 percent of entrepreneurs. (Felder & Vuollo, 2008).

## Introduction Cont.

- ▶ Women in this region still place higher priority to men's rights rather than their own rights. There are several laws in majority of Muslim countries, which may be termed inegalitarian and have increased women's vulnerability. Some of these laws reflect a patriarchal tribal influence on Islamic traditions (Seyed & Ali, 2019).

# Table of Content

To underpin and evaluate the issues related to women the rest of paper is organized as follows.

2. Literature review on women's empowerment and its development in labor force and political representation across different countries in MENA region.

3. Theoretical framework.

4. Data and methodology used in this study.

5. Estimated econometric results of the cross-country analysis.

6. conclusion and provides policy recommendations.

## Literature Review

- ▶ Importance of women to economic development has been highlighted in several studies (Metcalf 2005; Pereira, 2020; Pereira & Bamel, 2021). **Women have development constraints due to the strong gender inequality.** For example, the number of women entrepreneurs in MENA region is lagging compared to men in many states (Bastin, Metcalfe & Zali, 2019).

# Women's Right in Political Presentation

- ▶ Women are underrepresented in decision making across the MENA region. For instance, in Egypt, no women were appointed in the post 2011 cabinet and no women has ever become a governor (Hassan, 2015).
- ▶ Iraq witnessed radical changes to its political system post 2003. These changes occurred after many wars, sanctions, and external occupation until it became one of the failed states. Despite introducing new laws, women have been absent from the front line of the political life. When in 2004 national assembly was formed, only 20% of members were women (Alwan, Qati, & Ali, 2021).

# Estimated Costs

It is estimated that MENA region loses USD 575 billion due to current gender-based culture, which have contributed to misperception of women about their rights and internalizing the externalities.

# Research Questions

This study uses a quantitative approach covering 12 countries in the region to test three hypotheses:

(i) Does education matter to participation in the labor force and political presentation

(ii) Does corruption index matter for female participation in the labor force and political representation

(iii) Has Arab spring exacerbated the degree of women's participation in the labor force and representation in the political system.

# Data and Sample Countries

Data: This study uses a quantitative approach covering 12 countries in the region to test three above mentioned hypotheses.

We use data for the period of 2005-2023 from indicators of the World Bank website and from Congressional Budget Office.

Sample Countries includes Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.

Finally, data on corruption index is retrieved from International Transparency.

# Methodology

- ▶ We test the hypothesis that advanced education at tertiary level has a positive correlation with women participation in the labor force. Second, we test the hypothesis that corruption impedes women from participating in labor force and in political system. Third, we test the hypothesis whether Arab Spring has had any significant impact on the women labor force participation and political representation in parliaments.

## Literature Review

- ▶ The correlation between women at work and corruption has been the focus of several studies including Dollar, Fisman, & Gatti (2001) who find the greater representation of women in parliament, the lower the level of corruption.
- ▶ Swamy et al. (2000) find that women are less involved in bribery and corrupted behavior.

## Literature Review

- ▶ Samimi et al. (2013) use panel data for the period 2003-2010 for 27 selected Islamic states and find that with an increase in the rate of women's participation in labor force corruption has decreased dramatically.
- ▶ Bishara (2011) in a more corrupted society there is less chance for women to participate in the labor force.

# Equations

- ▶ Using fixed effect random effect model we estimate the following equation for labor force participation:

$$FLP = a_0 + a_1 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k Edu + a_2 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k Corrup + a_3 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k X_{ij}$$

# Equations

- ▶ Equation 2 for polity representation is as follows:

$$PPR = b_0 + b_1 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k Edu + b_2 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k Corrup + b_3 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^k X_{ij}$$

# List of Variables

Name of Variable	Definition
FLP	Female Labor Force Participation
FPR	Female Political Representation
Edu	Education at Tertiary level
Corrupt	Corruption score
Dummy 1	Jasmine revolution
Dummy 2	Post-war state
Control Variables	GDP growth, Budget deficit, Per-capita loan, financial development

## Estimated Results for Women's Participation in Labor Force

- ▶ The coefficient on education is statistically significant and the elasticity to tertiary education is estimated around 0.34
- ▶ Expectedly, the coefficient on corruption is negative and statistically significant, and indicates that one percent increase in the index of corruption reduces the possibility of women participation in the labor force by 0.12 percent.
- ▶ Consistent with (Bishara, 2011) we find in a more corrupted society, there is less chance for women to participate in the labor force.

## Estimated Results for Women's Participation in Labor Force

- ▶ The coefficient on the dummy variable for Jasmine revolution (D1) is negative and statistically significant, indicating that the Arab Spring has exacerbated women's participation in the labor force, consistent with studies by Chamlou & Karshenas (2016); and (Battaloglu & Fassin, 2017), the post Arab Spring states are more conservative.
- ▶ Finally, the coefficient for the second dummy variable, post-war states (D2) is negative and statistically significant highlighting that post-war states have had lower participation of women in the labor market.

## Estimated Results for Women's Representation in the Parliament Cont.

- ▶ The elasticity of women's seats held in the parliaments to education is estimated 0.12, which indicates one percent increase in the number of females in tertiary education will increase women's participation in the parliament by 0.12 percent.
- ▶ The elasticity of female participation in polity to corruption is negative and equal to 0.17, which indicates one percent increase in the corruption index reduces the number of seats held by women in the parliament by 0.17.

## Estimated Results for Women's Representation in the Parliament Cont.

- ▶ The dummy variable for the Arab spring is negative and statistically significant, indicating that Arab Spring has had a negative impact on women's participation in political representation.
- ▶ Finally, the coefficient on the dummy variable on the war states (D2) is also negative and statistically significant, indicating that women in the post war states such as Afghanistan, Algeria, and Iraq have experienced lower participation in the parliament.

## Estimated Results for Women's Representation in the Parliament Continues

- ▶ The post-Arab Spring political events indicate pressures on Middle East countries to democratize has been replaced by security cooperation and anti-terrorism measures as the top priority (Battaloglu & Fassin, 2017). This replacement has had severe negative consequences for women's participation in economic and political activities.

## Estimated Results for Women's Representation in the Parliament Continues

- ▶ Finally, the coefficients on control variables including GDP growth, budget deficit, per-capita loans and financial development are not statistically significant, indicating that women's participation in the parliaments have not been shaped by orthodox macroeconomic fundamentals.

# Conclusion

- ▶ We found that corruption plays a detrimental role in women's participation both in labor force and political representation. Therefore, anti-corruption reforms should be at the center of attention, not only by domestic governments, but also by the international donors and governments who provide foreign aid to the MENA region. **Conditionality of foreign aids to anti-corruption measures is an instrument that can help women in MENA to achieve greater gender equality and women empowerment.**

# Conclusion

- ▶ We found that Jasmine revolution has had a negative impact on women participation in the labor force and in the political representation.
- ▶ In addition, we found that, while orthodox macroeconomic fundamentals do not matter for women's participation, being in a post war state has limited the potentials for participating in labor force and polity.

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