

Salasika

INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF GENDER, WOMEN,
CHILD, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION'S STUDIES



**VOL. 9
NO. 1**

**JUNE
2026**

**Redefining Shadow Puppets Performed
by Solo Raya Female Puppeters on YouTube**
Setyasih Harini, Christy Damayanti, Qonitah Rohmadiena

**Gendered Power and Bureaucratic Governance
Decision-Making Inequality in West Sumatra**
Rozidateeno Putri Hanida, Redni Putri Meldianto

**Regulatory Reconstruction of Femicide Phenomena and Gender-Based Violence
against Women Viewed from a Victimology Perspective**
Endang Suparta, Fanny Refika

**Gender Reform in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates:
A comparative study**
Devara Reyhan Wibisono

**Women Actors' Co-Creation in Developing an Ecoikat Mini Collection
Based on East Sumba Ikat Textile**
Mustikad Zai, Arianti Ina Restiani Hunga, Antik Tri Susanti



Salasika

**INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF GENDER, WOMEN,
CHILD, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION'S STUDIES**

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1 – JUNE 2026

Table of Content

Redefining Shadow Puppets Performed by Solo Raya Female Puppeters on YouTube Setyasih Harini, Christy Damayanti, Qonitah Rohmadiana	1
Gendered Power and Bureaucratic Governance Decision-Making Inequality in West Sumatra Rozidateeno Putri Hanida, Redni Putri Meldianto	17
Regulatory Reconstruction of Femicide Phenomena and Gender-Based Violence against Women Viewed from a Victimology Perspective Endang Suparta, Fanny Refika	31
Gender Reform in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: A comparative study Devara Reyhan Wibisono	47
Women Actors' Co-Creation in Developing an Ecoikat Mini Collection Based on East Sumba Ikat Textile Mustikad Zai, Arianti Ina Restiani Hunga, Antik Tri Susanti	65

Editorial Team

CHIEF EDITORS

Arianti Ina Restiani Hunga, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 46161114400, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1627-2353,
SINTA ID: 9240, Google Scholar)

Dewi Candraningrum, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 59003567500, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4522-2374,
SINTA ID: 6768126, Google Scholar)

BOARD OF EDITORS

Claudia Derichs, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany
(Scopus ID: 14026487800)

Ida Sabelis, North-West University (NWU), South Africa
(Scopus ID: 6507181398, Google Scholar)

Siti Kusujiarti, Warren Wilson College, USA
(Scopus ID: 56276925900)

Ratna Saptari, Leiden University, The Netherlands
(Scopus ID: 6504610910)

Sylvia Tiwon, University of California, USA
(Scopus ID: 6506468591)

Emy Susanti, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57213142220, Google Scholar)

Keppi Sukesi, Brawijaya University, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 56025803300, Google Scholar)

Kristi Poerwandari, University of Indonesia, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 25628305200, Google Scholar)

Willemijn de Jong, University of Zurich, Switzerland
(Scopus ID: 55258294800)

Lyn Parker, The University of Western Australia, Australia
(Scopus ID: 56273266700)

TECHNICAL EDITORS

Indriretno Setyaningrahyu, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
(Google Scholar)

Daniel Kurniawan, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia
(SINTA ID: 6842476, Google Scholar)

Suryaningsi, Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57223402854, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1093-810X>,
ID Sinta: 5990865, Google Scholar)

Agustinus Fritz Wijaya, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 56461093400, Google Scholar)

Rustina Untari, Universitas Katolik Soegijaprana, Semarang, Indonesia

Stefanus Perangin-Angin, Pusat Studi Gender dan Anak - Universitas Kristen
Satya Wacana, Indonesia (Google Scholar)

Welhelmina Maria Yuniaputri Hailitik, Pusat Studi Gender dan Anak -
Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia

REVIEWERS

Elisabet Titik Murtisari, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 38161752200, Google Scholar)

Asfa Widiyanto, IAIN Salatiga, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 56451676900, Google Scholar)

Wening Udasmoro, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 56493135600)

Farah Purwaningrum, The University of Sydney, Australia
(Scopus ID: 57192369400, Google Scholar)

Alimatul Qibtiyah, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57200660732, Google Scholar)

Tyas Retno Wulan, The Jenderal Soedirman University, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57205341358, Google Scholar)

Nurjanah, State University of Jakarta, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57210948418)

Ira Desiawanti Mangiliko, The Artha Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

Keiko Hirano, Ochanomizu University, Jepang
(Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3258-6072>)

Anik Yuesti, Universitas Mahasaraswati, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57214104250, Google Scholar)

Nurdiana Gaus, STIKS Tamalanre Makassar, Indonesia
(Google Scholar)

Yacinta Kurniasih, Monash University, Australia
(Google Scholar)

Yafet Yosafet Wilben Rissy, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
(Scopus ID: 57221474276, Google Scholar)

Gender Reform in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: A comparative study

Devara Reyhan Wibisono

*International Relations Study, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

Contributor email: devara88215@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Middle East is a region rife with conflict and war, with no shortage of its own problems. A region that is strategic yet hotly contested by various powers, from which it derives its rather unique socio-political and cultural landscape. A common consensus is that due to its relatively outdated values and constant power struggle, the Middle East region as a whole is one where vulnerable groups, such as refugees, children, and most notably women, suffer from mistreatment and lack of adequate rights. Despite that, the region still shows large gaps in treatment and rights to these groups, even between neighbors. One of the most striking cases is Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Despite being direct neighbors, both nations have vastly different approaches to matters such as gender issues. Where Saudi Arabia still struggles with basic democratization and emancipation -such as during the Arab Spring wave of protests- the UAE instead has embraced a more forward way of thinking, allowing opportunities for women to serve in official government representative offices. Our study will examine the case between these two countries, and what factors created this diverging path, using qualitative observations of the two nations' stance on gender-related matters.

KEYWORDS: *gender-rights development, Middle East, women's emancipation, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, gender-disparity, gender-rights transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has been a historically diverse region and a strategically positioned one. It sits at the confluence of the Asian, African, and European continents, and thus becomes an important link in the flow of trade, goods, and even people through the ages. Cultures also intersect in this geographic junction, cross-introducing arts and customs between the people on this ancient trade route.

Inevitably, civilizations and empires emerge. A region dubbed the "fertile crescent" stretches between the Mesopotamian river delta towards Aleppo in Syria, and Alexandria in Egypt. It did not take long for hegemonies, such as the Persian Sassanids and the Greco-Roman Empire, to expand into the region, dividing the various tribes and cultures into their own realms. Finally, Islam

rose. A religion endemic to the Middle Eastern Arabs, and now almost inseparable from their cultural and national identity. Since its rise in 610 A.D., it expanded and grew alongside Arabian culture and norms, forming a large backbone over the Middle Eastern empire and civilization, and most importantly, its identity. The seat of Middle Eastern power would often change hands in the years to come: the Umayyads in the immediate post-Rashidun era, followed by the Abbasids and Fatimids, until eventually they were all succeeded by the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

A noticeable pattern is visible, and it has been prevalent in Middle Eastern and Arabic society since the dawn of civilization. The region is rife with conflict, and with it, countless wars and conquest. Even before the rise of major empires, the tribal culture of the Middle East revolved around martial prowess, strength, and conquest, notions that play heavily to masculine traits. These would be ingrained into later traditions and civilization, and survive until even the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, by the end of World War I, most of the Middle East would fall under the colonial rule of Western powers. The Levant split between French and British holdings, Egypt under British rule, along with the territories around the Persian Gulf. Some territories, such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia, maintained nominal independence; however, the latter would emerge more as a collection of tribal polities rather than a proper modern state.

The cultural and societal values of Middle Eastern society, as a result, advanced little from its heyday under the wing of the Islamic caliphates, and were not helped by being far from the center of Islamic power in Istanbul during the time of the Ottoman Empire. Arab society, by and large, still revolves around tribal and traditionalist customs, and its people are still dominated by either farmers, herders, caravan-traders, or the like. As a result, more modern notions such as “democracy” as viewed through Western lenses or emancipation are not prevalent, at least not in a clearly manifested form.

It is not to say that the rise of Islam does little to benefit traditional Arabic customs. In fact, Islamic law played a significant role in shaping gender dynamics, particularly in areas such as family, property, and public space. Women had certain rights under Islamic law, such as access to property and economic activities, and were included in and able to use the legal system to enhance their social and economic positions (Tucker, 2020). This by itself is a massive shift from pre-Islamic Arabia, where rights for women and children are more grey, or even unprotected (Bimawan et al., 2025). However, the interpretation of Islamic law often reinforced a patriarchal structure, privileging men in family and societal roles, and interpretations of laws that benefit power-holders at the time could limit their practical application (Tucker, 2020).

As a result, despite Islamic family law codifying distinct roles for men and women, it often emphasizes male authority within the family as a “Leader” in the household. While women had legal rights in marriage and divorce, the aforementioned role of males led to patriarchal interpretations and practices, frequently constraining women’s rights (Louden-Cooke, 2024). Moreover, reforms in family law during the 19th century remained limited, as Islamic law remained deeply embedded in socio-cultural practices and the enduring backbone of Arab and Middle Eastern society and identity. This continuity

therefore reinforced traditional gender roles, with men retaining significant control over family and marital decisions (Dahlgren & Lindbekk, 2020).

Colonialism, however, introduced Western-based perspectives on societal issues. One of them was the notion of gender emancipation, which became the seed of the Islamic feminist movement. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of feminist movements in the Middle East, partly influenced by global women's movements. These movements sought to challenge both colonial narratives and patriarchal interpretations of Islam, advocating for reforms in areas like education, marriage, and legal rights (Zachs & Halevi, 2015). However, they took a different approach compared to the mainstream feminist movement, by reinterpreting religious texts to counter "textual misogyny" and reclaim the egalitarian principles of the Qur'an. This approach sought to reconcile feminist ideals with Islamic traditions, offering an alternative to secular feminist models (Haniffa, 2016).

In places under colonial rule, or those that had peaceful transitions from their colonial overlords, these ideas easily took root and grew. One of the earliest was Egypt, where plenty of modern Islamic thinkers emerged, along with other secular and religious movements seeking to reform both Islamic and Arab society. However, in this case, I have taken the case of the United Arab Emirates especially, due to its large and central role in the image of an advanced Arabic society, and one of the pre-eminent Islamic states in the modern world. Since its founding in 1971, the UAE has actively promoted women's empowerment, particularly in politics. Notably, the UAE appointed the first female minister in 2004 and achieved gender parity in parliament by 2019 (Alzaabi & Yaiche, 2025). These efforts are clearly visible not just in the regional scope, but through international lenses. In contrast, the Middle East is often noted for its "backward" connotation towards rights and safety; leadership and public policies have played a pivotal role in advancing women's political participation in the UAE, positioning it as a regional model for gender inclusivity.

Meanwhile, therein also lie old, major regional powers such as Iraq, Iran, or even Saudi Arabia. All of which have been long independent from any form of colonialism, and which traditional institutions burrow deep roots in, be it in statecraft, culture, or even social life and status. Iraq had a long and complicated history of power struggles, with the then-known Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq's leader deposed in 1958 by the 14th of July coup, leading to continuous political violence which culminated in the demise of the Iraqi Ba'athist party government of Saddam Hussein. However, to this day, Iraq's history of violence continues to hamper progressive initiatives from taking hold, as it becomes sidelined amidst other more important (or even necessary) efforts like rebuilding and counter-insurgency, a problem still prevalent in many war-torn Arab states nowadays.

Iran, meanwhile, to its north, stands as one of the oldest independent states of the region. The Persianate dynasties may change, but it is overall almost impervious to any attempt at external invasion or colonization efforts. The Pahlavi regime saw plenty of progress not only in economic build-up, but also in societal transformation, mirroring Western societal evolution. This, however,

would be put to a stop by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since then, societal and even personal freedom has been curtailed in the name of “Religion”, with the now “Islamic Republic of Iran” becoming a proto-theocratic authoritarian state, where nearly every facet of its statehood and society is now under control by the Khomeini regime. This has caused a degradation in personal freedom and societal progressivism in the nation, of which even the role that women play has been slowly curtailed since the 90s and 2000s.

However, for our comparison against the UAE, I have taken the nation of Saudi Arabia as the second subject in this case. An independent state since its separation from the Ottoman Empire, Saudi Arabia continued to exist as a collection of tribal polities under a “de jure” rule by House Saud of Nejd. As a sovereign nation existing on the sidelines of preexisting global superpowers, they see very little development, both societal and economic. As for gender discourse, their ideology has historically been rooted in Islamic principles and tribal traditions, emphasizing the role of women as caregivers confined to the private sphere. This idealized model of the “Muslim woman” has been central to Saudi national identity, with men acting as guardians. However, the male guardianship system and notions of family honor have reinforced gender segregation and limited women's public roles (Giladi, 2023). Though the discovery of oil in the 20th century brought economic modernization, it did not immediately challenge restrictive gender norms, not helped by the secluded, authoritarian rule of the Saudi dynasty.

My research therefore wishes to delve deeper into the divide between these two neighboring, yet vastly different states, both in their policies and their societal culture. Through a qualitative lens on the respective nation's history and upbringing, I will provide an overview of how tradition and religion shape the two countries, and how they affect their present-day policies and outlook.

METHODS

Firstly, I would like to start with the socio-historical aspects, highlighting the difference between Saudi Arabia (as an independent Tribal Monarchy) and the United Arab Emirates (as a polity of tribal powers), the latter of which was an ex-subject of colonial Britain, and also adopts a more democratic-leaning constitution compared to its Saudi peers. A deeper look at these factors in context, I believe, can better explain the divergence between the two nations' different gender outlooks, by not detaching the ideals of feminism from the reality of Arab society itself. Cross-referencing these with factors such as social class and tribal values, local cultural and family values, the role of religion as a backbone that shapes Arab culture and society, whilst taking a specific interest in the Arab Spring period, one which became the culmination and defined gender struggle in the Middle East and the Arab world.

The research would lean heavily into the Constructivist theory's lens, coupled with a deeper look into the role of Feminism in not just civilian lives, but also state politics. For example, on the UAE side, their gender policies are not just functional but also symbolic, projecting an image of progressiveness while maintaining cultural authenticity. This duality is evident in how Emirati

women are portrayed as mediators between tradition and modernity, reinforcing national identity while appealing to global audiences (Goby, 2026), itself leaning into a constructivist understanding of how policies can shape and be shaped by collective beliefs about gender roles.

The historical aspect would be done through the lens of Postcolonial theory, as it can explain an alternative perspective on the issues faced by the UAE as a post-colonial country, Saudi Arabia as a largely independent country, and how it often differs from the primarily “Western Ideal” of things. In the UAE, for example, colonial legacies influence contemporary policies, particularly in areas like labor and migration. Historical narratives around trafficking and the regulation of women’s movement during British colonial rule continue to shape gendered policies, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups such as working-class and Muslim women (Wright, 2025). Postcolonialism theory highlights how these policies perpetuate uneven power dynamics rooted in colonial histories, challenging Western feminist frameworks that often overlook the unique lived experiences and agency of women in the Middle East.

The method I would therefore take would lean more into an institutional-interpretative approach. By looking with a qualitative lens at the various factors mentioned before through a qualitative lens, cross-referencing them with each other as well as present-day factors such as Saudi Arabian or United Arab Emirates policies. By reading deeper into the various socio-cultural, traditional, or even religious contexts of the people in the region, and pairing it with present-day realities and policies, I hope to piece together a more concrete, contextually sensitive picture of the present-day situation regarding gender equality in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Thus, the research would combine all these factors and analyze them through a qualitative lens, bridging the differing factors to create a hypothesis that may explain the gulf in gender development and policies between these two neighboring countries.

DISCUSSION

Despite the Islamic world being notable for its advances in many fields, even in social sciences and rights compared to its European peers in the past, for modern standards -especially in the Middle-East- the reputation of rights and equality in the Arabic sphere of influence is not one that is viewed in a good light. It is not helped by the non-religious, antiquated values held by traditional Arab societies, which are often enshrined by countries, especially like Saudi Arabia, which places an emphasis on a single, strong ruler who possesses martial prowess or other forms of power.

Of course, these social classes and tribal identities play a critical role in shaping women’s opportunities. Women from tribal backgrounds often face additional barriers due to traditional norms and expectations tied to their tribal identity. For instance, tribal women engaging in entrepreneurship must navigate identity conflicts and societal expectations, which influence their ability to develop entrepreneurial identities (Alzahrani et al., 2026). Additionally, Riansyah (Riansyah & Juned, 2024) stated that tribal norms, such as the concept

of *ayb* (shame), reinforce gender segregation and restrict women's professional opportunities.

Notably, traditional family values also play a role in limiting opportunities. Almalki (Almalki, 2020) elaborates that Arabic family values emphasize obedience (*Al-Birr*) and male protection (*Al-Wali*), which perpetuate traditional gender roles. These values are deeply rooted in an interpretation of Islamic traditions and are reinforced through parenting practices. Whilst on the religion-front itself, Syed (Syed et al., 2018) highlights the role of religious ideologies, especially with how they deeply intersect with cultural norms to sustain gender disparities, and certain interpretations of religious texts create a bigger gulf between both genders. That is on top of basic Islamic concepts such as *hudud* (invisible boundaries) and the male guardianship system, which restrict women's autonomy and reinforce traditional gender roles.

In this research, they have managed to show the individual problems and challenges hampering advancements in gender equality in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE. However, there is still a lack of research on how the intersection between those multiple factors (e.g., class, tribal identity, and religion) uniquely shapes gender inequality in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, nor does it show how socio-historical contexts shape the societies that define the current gender norms, nor how it affects the formation of such norms. While limited research exists on sector-specific gender disparities, such as healthcare, education, and leadership, in both countries, there is a scarcity of longitudinal and quantitative studies comparing gender equality metrics between Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Omair et al., 2020; Wirayuda et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, across both countries, women's experiences are shaped by the intersection of multiple identities, including class, ethnicity, and religion. For example, women from lower social classes or minority ethnic groups face compounded disadvantages in patriarchal systems that stratify women based on wealth, ethnicity, and chastity (Aldeeb, 2021). These factors combined create complex barriers to gender equality in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and introduce the main metrics which I would like to research.

Historical Aspect

Firstly, the upbringing of both states is an important consideration, as historical factors play a major role in explaining why Saudi Arabia and the UAE developed different approaches to gender reform itself. Saudi Arabia's identity was formed through independent tribal-monarchical unification, and was formally unified as a kingdom in 1932 under Ibn Saud, and its political structure preserved strong links between monarchy, tribal authority, and conservative religious legitimacy; this more traditional-leaning background leads to the preservation of older, tribal codices and customs, and becomes a historical foundation which helps maintain patriarchal institutions such as gender segregation and male guardianship for much of the twentieth century (al-Rasheed, 2010). While the UAE, in contrast, emerged from the British-protected Trucial States and was only officially formed in 1971 after Britain withdrew from treaty relations with the Trucial States, meaning its post-independence state-

building was shaped by federation, external diplomatic engagement, and rapid modernization (Zahlan, 1978), despite the fact that the UAE's gender policies are deeply intertwined with its cultural and societal evolution. Its colonial past and subsequent independence resulted in a framework that emphasizes more Western values than the likes of Saudi Arabia, and the end product resulted in balancing modernization with the preservation of Islamic and tribal traditions, which continue to influence gender roles and expectations.

This difference is visible in contemporary gender-policy outcomes: the UAE mandated 50% female representation in its Federal National Council in 2019, whilst female-run businesses and enterprises have existed since the 90s in the UAE. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's "rude awakening" on the issue only came about after the Arab Spring, followed by promises of gender reforms that are set to accelerate more recently under Vision 2030 (Al et al., 2025). Therefore, historical context in one scope or another matters, as visible through the case of Saudi Arabia's independent formation reinforcing traditional religious-tribal legitimacy, whereas the UAE's former British-protected status and later federal modernization of the postcolonial era encouraged the former Trucial States to adopt a more "modern" ideological basis of statecraft and policies.

Social Class and Traditional Values

Our second study parameter would revolve around social class and traditional/ethnic values, and how they influence gender equality and policy in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Both nations descended from similar Arabic tribes and cultures, and were held together by large Islamic empires of the past. The values inherited from these continue to shape the modern Middle Eastern social landscape, as gender equality is not merely a lack of equal access and opportunities, but also how powerful families and clans shape which people, even women, benefit most from reform and how far reforms can challenge patriarchal social expectations.

In Saudi Arabia, gender inequality has historically been reinforced by family authority, tribal norms, and male guardianship, where parents and male authority figures strongly influence whether women work outside the home (HRW, 2016). However, heeding lessons from the Arab Spring and their push for reforms, Vision 2030 has pushed policy reform, with women's labor-force participation rising from around 20% in 2017 to a target of roughly 30% in 2020, and World Bank data later recording Saudi female labor-force participation at about 34% in 2025 (STUDYLIB, n.d.) (Worldbank, 2024). Meanwhile in the UAE, state policy presents women's empowerment as part of national modernization, with constitutional equality, equal-pay measures, domestic-violence protection, and 50% female representation in the Federal National Council; despite this however, class and ethnic hierarchy remain visible because Emirati women are more directly included in empowerment policies, while many migrant and domestic women workers remain vulnerable under labor-migration systems (pchr, n.d.).

One can infer from this that policy reform can improve women's public participation; however, social class and family backgrounds in both countries still heavily affect access to education, work, mobility, and professional networks. Moreover, especially in the case of the UAE, the representation can sometimes be inferred as mere "quota-filling" rather than a case of properly bridging the gender gap, as evident by the lack of extended access to migrant women in their empowerment policies. Therefore, in both countries, gender policies and women's empowerment are still heavily affected, or even hampered by traditional values and social hierarchy, and they do not simply disappear through legal reform; instead, they shape how gender-equality policies are implemented, who gains access to empowerment, and which groups of women remain structurally disadvantaged. It signifies a carry-over of the older tribal culture and the systems it brought with it, something endemic to not just the two nations, but to every Middle Eastern country, and is a link to how these values are affected by historical upbringing.

Cultural and Family Values

Our third study revolves around the cultural & family values aspect in the Middle East, and how they—I would argue—most directly affect how gender equality is realized in the region. For example, in Saudi Arabia, cultural and family values strongly influence gender equality by positioning the family as a hierarchical institution in which male authority remains central to women's social and legal autonomy, in line with traditional Arabic customs and upheld by interpretation of Islamic teachings. This can be seen in the 2022 Personal Status Law, which, in spite of pushes for reforms driven by protests such as the Arab Spring, still requires women to obtain male guardian involvement in marriage and preserves unequal rights in areas such as divorce, custody, and marital authority, showing that family-based patriarchy continues to shape gender policy even after recent modernization reforms (amnesty.org, 2022). In addition, research on women's employment in Saudi Arabia shows that family approval, especially from parents and male authority figures, remains one of the most important factors affecting whether women participate in work outside the home; although women's labor-force participation increased from around 20% in 2017 to roughly 30% in 2020, cultural expectations about women's family roles still influence how reforms are experienced in daily life (Agboola, 2021) (Alotaibi et al., 2021). Therefore, Saudi gender policy is not only shaped by law or economic reform, but also by deeply rooted family norms that continue to regulate women's mobility, marriage, employment, and public participation (amnesty.org, 2022).

Similarly in the UAE, traditional Arabic cultural and family values also influence gender equality. However, the state views -and thus, frames- family stability and women's empowerment as complementary rather than contradictory. The UAE's National Policy for Empowerment of Emirati Women 2023–2031 explicitly includes the goal of building "strong, cohesive, and supportive families" while also integrating women into the labor market, leadership, entrepreneurship, and future economic sectors, with heavy emphasis on cross-integration between fields (uaelegislation, 2023). Such

policies show that the UAE does not reject traditional family values outright, instead incorporating them into a modernization agenda where women are encouraged to contribute to national development while maintaining socially accepted family roles, itself a different perspective on gender empowerment from the traditional (Western) perspective of feminism. The UAE's policy direction is also reflected in legal and institutional measures such as equal-pay legislation, protection against domestic violence, women's access to education and employment, and the requirement that women hold 50% of Federal National Council seats UAEL (uaelegislation, 2023; pchr, n.d.). Thus, while cultural expectations remain important in Emirati society, they are increasingly used by the state to legitimize women's public participation rather than restrict it, which is part of the UAE's agenda to showcase its relative "modernity" in comparison to its neighbors.

The comparison highlighted above shows that both Saudi Arabia and the UAE are nonetheless still shaped by conservative cultural and family values. However, they differ in how those values are translated into gender policy, either as a result of differing ideologies on the national level, or by subtle cultural differences between Arab tribes. In Saudi Arabia, for example, family authority has historically operated as a mechanism of control, especially through male guardianship and legal rules governing marriage and family relations. However, in the UAE, family values are presented as part of a national empowerment model, where women's participation in politics, work, and leadership is viewed as beneficial to both the family and the nation. Therefore, in these aspects, cultural and family values do not automatically prevent gender reform; rather, I would argue that their impact depends on how the state interprets and institutionalizes them within national policy.

State-Led Reform and the Politics of Gender Modernization

The comparison between Saudi Arabia and the UAE becomes more significant when gender reform is understood not simply as a response to social pressure, but as a form of state-building. In both countries, gender equality has increasingly become connected to national development, international reputation, economic diversification, and the construction of a modern national identity. This suggests that gender reform cannot be understood only through the traditional opposition between "conservative" and "progressive" societies. Rather, the two cases demonstrate different ways in which authoritarian or highly centralized states can selectively reinterpret existing cultural norms in order to accommodate new economic and political objectives.

The UAE provides a particularly clear example of state-led gender modernization. Women's participation in politics, government, entrepreneurship, and professional life has increasingly been incorporated into the official narrative of national development. The National Policy for Empowerment of Emirati Women 2023–2031, for instance, does not frame women's empowerment as a rejection of family or cultural values. Instead, it presents women's participation as compatible with strong families, national cohesion, economic development, and social stability (uaelegislation, 2023). This is important because it demonstrates that gender reform does not necessarily

require the state to abandon traditional cultural legitimacy. The UAE instead reconstructs the meaning of tradition so that women's public participation becomes compatible with national identity.

From a constructivist perspective, this represents an important transformation in the social meaning of gender. Gender roles are not simply fixed cultural structures; they are continuously reproduced through institutions, discourse, and political practice. When the state begins to describe women as political representatives, entrepreneurs, professionals, and contributors to national development, it gradually changes the socially legitimate meaning of womanhood. Goby (2026), for example, demonstrates how Emirati womanhood can be framed through the simultaneous language of heritage and modernity. Women become symbols of a nation that is able to modernize without abandoning its cultural identity. Consequently, the image of the “modern Emirati woman” is not necessarily constructed as a rejection of Arab or Islamic traditions. Instead, she becomes evidence that the UAE can selectively combine tradition with modernization.

This is different from a model in which feminism is necessarily understood as opposition to patriarchal institutions. In the UAE case, women's empowerment can be incorporated into the existing political order. The state does not necessarily need to dismantle the traditional family structure in order to promote women's participation in public life. Instead, it can redefine women's public participation as beneficial to the family and the nation. This explains why policies concerning women's leadership, education, employment, and political representation can coexist with a political system that remains highly centralized.

Saudi Arabia demonstrates a somewhat different trajectory. Historically, the Saudi political order developed through the close relationship between monarchy, tribal authority, and religious legitimacy. Al-Rasheed (2010) shows how the formation of the Saudi state cannot be separated from these political and religious foundations. Gender arrangements therefore became embedded not merely in individual social attitudes but in broader structures of authority. Male guardianship and gender segregation were consequently connected to a wider political and social order in which male authority was normalized through family, religion, and state institutions.

Recent reforms nevertheless demonstrate that these structures are not completely immutable. Vision 2030 has increasingly connected women's economic participation with national development. The rise in female labor-force participation is particularly important because it demonstrates that changes in economic policy can generate changes in gender relations. However, the persistence of family expectations and patriarchal interpretations means that formal reform does not automatically eliminate older social structures. Agboola (2021) and Syed et al. (2018) both demonstrate that women's employment decisions continue to be influenced by family relations and broader social expectations.

Therefore, the key distinction between the UAE and Saudi Arabia is not simply that one country is “modern” while the other is “traditional.” Both remain deeply connected to traditional cultural and familial structures. Rather,

the difference concerns the **political interpretation and institutionalization of those structures**. The UAE has more consistently incorporated women's public participation into its national modernization narrative, whereas Saudi Arabia has historically treated women's public autonomy as more closely connected to questions of family authority, religious legitimacy, and social order. Recent Saudi reforms indicate movement away from this older model, but the transition remains incomplete.

The Arab Spring and the Acceleration of Gender Reform

The Arab Spring is another important factor in understanding the divergence between the two countries. Although the political consequences of the Arab Spring varied considerably across the Middle East, the uprisings fundamentally challenged existing assumptions about political authority, citizenship, and social participation. Gender was part of this broader transformation because women were not simply passive observers of political change. Women's participation in protest movements also challenged the assumption that political activity belonged primarily to men.

For Saudi Arabia, the Arab Spring created an important political context in which questions of citizenship, participation, and women's rights became increasingly difficult to separate from broader discussions of political legitimacy. Although Saudi Arabia did not experience a regime change comparable to other Arab countries, the regional upheaval demonstrated the potential risks associated with social dissatisfaction. Gender reform subsequently became increasingly visible within a broader strategy of controlled modernization.

This helps explain why Saudi reforms have often occurred through state initiatives rather than through a fundamental transformation of the political system. The lifting of restrictions on women's driving, the expansion of women's employment, and changes in women's participation in public life represent significant transformations. Yet these reforms have been carefully incorporated into the existing political order. In other words, the Saudi state has attempted to modernize gender relations without surrendering its broader political authority.

The 2022 Personal Status Law illustrates the complexity of this process. Amnesty International (2022) and Human Rights Watch (2023) argue that although Saudi Arabia has introduced significant reforms, legal structures continue to institutionalize aspects of male guardianship and gender discrimination. This creates a contradiction between economic and social modernization on the one hand and the persistence of patriarchal legal structures on the other. Women can therefore experience greater opportunities in employment and public life while simultaneously encountering restrictions within family law.

This contradiction is analytically important because it challenges the assumption that gender equality progresses uniformly across different domains. A country may perform strongly in women's employment while continuing to produce inequality in marriage, divorce, custody, or family authority. Similarly,

political representation can increase without necessarily producing a redistribution of political power. Gender reform therefore needs to be examined as a multidimensional process rather than reduced to a single indicator.

The UAE demonstrates a more institutionally coordinated approach. Women's empowerment has become integrated into national policy, political representation, economic development, and international image-making. The 50 percent representation requirement for women in the Federal National Council is especially significant because it demonstrates the state's willingness to use institutional mechanisms to accelerate women's political presence. Alzaabi and Yaiche (2025) identify the UAE as a distinctive model of women's political participation in the region.

However, this achievement should not automatically be equated with complete political equality. Representation and empowerment are not synonymous. A quota can alter the demographic composition of a political institution while leaving broader structures of political authority unchanged. This is particularly important in the UAE because political participation operates within a highly centralized political system. The existence of women in formal representative positions therefore demonstrates state recognition of women's political legitimacy, but it does not necessarily demonstrate the existence of unrestricted democratic participation.

The comparison consequently reveals two different models of state-led gender reform. Saudi Arabia has increasingly pursued **reform through controlled liberalization**, in which selected restrictions are removed while the wider political structure remains intact. The UAE has more consistently pursued **institutionalized empowerment**, in which women's participation is incorporated into the state's modernization and nation-branding strategies. Both approaches are state-centered, but their historical trajectories and institutional mechanisms differ.

Intersectionality: Which Women Benefit from Reform?

Another important dimension of the comparison concerns the question of which women actually benefit from gender reform. The concept of "women" should not be treated as a homogeneous category. Gender intersects with class, nationality, ethnicity, migration status, family background, and social position. Consequently, improvements in the legal or political status of elite or citizen women may coexist with significant vulnerabilities among migrant, working-class, or domestic workers.

This issue is particularly important in the UAE. The country's international image of women's empowerment primarily concerns Emirati citizens and their participation in political and economic institutions. Yet the UAE also contains a very large migrant population, including women employed in domestic and other low-wage sectors. The existence of gender-equality policies does not necessarily mean that these women experience the same benefits. This creates a distinction between **citizen-centered gender empowerment** and **universal gender equality**.

The same issue appears in Saudi Arabia, although in different institutional forms. Alzahrani et al. (2026) demonstrate that tribal origin can influence women's entrepreneurial identity and the ways in which women negotiate expectations surrounding gender and social belonging. This finding is significant because it shows that women's empowerment cannot be measured simply through labor-force participation or the number of women entering entrepreneurship. Women must also negotiate the social meanings attached to family, tribe, reputation, and appropriate femininity.

The concept of *ayb*, discussed by Riansyah and Juned (2024), further illustrates how social expectations can operate outside formal law. Even when legislation permits women to work or participate in professional life, social sanctions and expectations may influence what kinds of work are considered acceptable. This means that legal reform can create formal opportunities without necessarily eliminating informal barriers.

The intersectional dimension therefore modifies the comparison between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The UAE may perform better in institutional indicators of women's political participation, while Saudi Arabia may demonstrate rapid improvement in labor-force participation. Yet neither development should automatically be interpreted as universal emancipation. The crucial question is whether reforms reach women across different social classes and legal statuses.

A more complete analysis should therefore distinguish between **formal equality, substantive equality, and symbolic equality**. Formal equality concerns legal rights and institutional access. Substantive equality concerns whether women are actually able to exercise those rights in everyday life. Symbolic equality concerns the extent to which women are represented as legitimate participants in national identity and public discourse. The UAE appears particularly strong in symbolic and institutional dimensions, while Saudi Arabia has demonstrated rapid movement in substantive economic participation but continues to face legal and familial constraints. Neither country can therefore be described adequately through a simple ranking of “more” or “less” progressive.

Religion, Tradition, and the Limits of the “Backward Middle East” Narrative

The analysis also needs to avoid reproducing a simplistic Western binary in which Islam and Arab culture are automatically positioned as obstacles to women's emancipation. Such a framework would undermine the postcolonial dimension of this study. The historical record demonstrates that Islamic law itself provided women with certain property, marital, and economic rights that differed from some pre-Islamic practices (Tucker, 2020). The problem is therefore not Islam as an undifferentiated category, but the ways in which religious texts, legal traditions, political institutions, and social customs are interpreted and institutionalized.

Islamic feminism is important in this regard because it demonstrates that Muslim women can challenge patriarchal practices through engagement with Islamic traditions rather than through rejection of religion. Haniffa (2016) explains how gender debates within Islam can involve reinterpretation of

religious texts and attempts to recover egalitarian principles. Zachs and Halevi (2015) similarly demonstrate the historical development of feminist movements that challenged both colonial representations and patriarchal interpretations of Middle Eastern societies.

This perspective changes the interpretation of Saudi and UAE reforms. Gender reform does not necessarily represent the replacement of Islamic culture by Western values. Instead, it can involve competing interpretations of what Islamic, Arab, or national identity should mean in contemporary society. The UAE's approach illustrates this particularly clearly: women are presented as capable of participating in modern political and economic institutions without ceasing to be Emirati or Muslim.

Saudi Arabia also demonstrates that religious legitimacy can be reinterpreted rather than simply abandoned. The country's recent reforms suggest that the relationship between religion, state authority, and gender is dynamic. What was previously presented as culturally or religiously necessary can become subject to reinterpretation when political and economic priorities change. This reinforces the constructivist argument that norms are not static structures but are continually reproduced and contested.

The comparison therefore suggests that gender reform in the Middle East should not be evaluated according to how closely a country approaches a predetermined Western model. Instead, analysis should examine how states, families, religious institutions, and women themselves negotiate the meanings of equality within particular historical contexts. This is also where postcolonial theory becomes especially useful. It allows the researcher to recognize that modernization does not have a single universal pathway and that women's agency cannot be measured solely according to Western liberal assumptions.

Comparative Synthesis: Two Models of Gender Reform

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the divergence between Saudi Arabia and the UAE is best explained through the interaction of four major factors: historical state formation, the relationship between political authority and religion, the institutional interpretation of family and tribal values, and the strategic use of women's empowerment in national development.

Saudi Arabia inherited a particularly strong connection between monarchy, tribal legitimacy, and religious authority. These institutions historically reinforced a model of gender relations centered on male guardianship and family authority. The country's recent economic transformation has disrupted some of these arrangements, particularly through women's employment and public participation. Nevertheless, the persistence of patriarchal family-law structures demonstrates that economic modernization does not necessarily produce comprehensive gender equality.

The UAE, by contrast, emerged from a federation of former Trucial States and subsequently developed a political identity strongly associated with rapid modernization, international engagement, and economic diversification. The state has therefore had greater incentive to incorporate women's participation

into its image of national advancement. Women's empowerment becomes not only a gender policy but also a component of state legitimacy, international reputation, and national soft power.

This does not mean that the UAE has completely overcome patriarchy. Rather, it demonstrates a different strategy for managing it. Instead of presenting women's public participation as a challenge to tradition, the state incorporates women's participation into a revised understanding of tradition. Women can become representatives of both cultural continuity and modernity. This is precisely why the UAE case is theoretically valuable: it demonstrates that conservative cultural values and women's empowerment can coexist when political institutions redefine their relationship.

The principal difference between the two countries, therefore, is not the complete presence or absence of tradition. Both societies continue to be shaped by family, religion, tribal identity, and hierarchical social structures. The difference lies in **how state institutions transform those structures into political narratives and policy mechanisms**. Saudi Arabia has historically used tradition to constrain women's autonomy but is increasingly redefining gender relations through economic modernization. The UAE has more successfully incorporated women's empowerment into the existing national narrative, turning women's public participation into evidence of modernization itself.

Consequently, the study proposes that gender reform in Saudi Arabia and the UAE should be understood as a process of **negotiated modernization**. Reform does not necessarily replace tradition; rather, it selectively reorganizes tradition. Some elements are weakened, others are retained, and still others are given new meanings. Women's empowerment is therefore neither simply a Western import nor a complete product of indigenous tradition. It emerges through interaction between global norms, national development strategies, religious interpretation, family structures, economic interests, and women's own demands for participation.

This comparative perspective also explains why progress remains uneven. If reform is primarily state-led, governments can accelerate change in selected areas while leaving other patriarchal structures untouched. Political representation may increase while migrant women remain vulnerable. Women's employment may rise while family-law inequalities remain. Public discourse may celebrate women's leadership while informal expectations continue to regulate women's behavior. These contradictions are not anomalies; they are central characteristics of state-managed gender reform.

The broader implication is that gender equality in Saudi Arabia and the UAE should therefore be evaluated not simply by asking which country is "more progressive," but by asking **what kind of reform is occurring, who benefits from it, which institutions remain unchanged, and how women themselves negotiate the new opportunities and constraints created by reform**. Such an approach provides a more nuanced explanation of the divergence between the two neighboring states and avoids reproducing the simplistic assumption that modernization automatically equals emancipation.

CONCLUSION

The Middle East is still a place fraught with conflict, and tensions both between states and even sectarian tensions still dominate the space of the people who live in it. However, still, changes are happening at a rapid pace. Conflicts between Iran and Israel (along with its allies) continue to heat up, whilst regions like Syria, previously devastated by war, are slowly rebuilding. Places like Iraq, Egypt and Oman are continuously building up their economies, whilst regional powerhouses such as Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia seek to consolidate their place as emerging powers not just in the region, but also on the world stage.

The Arab revolution, otherwise known as the Arab Spring of the 2010s, remains a work in progress, as the ramifications of the events continue to help shape how modern Middle Eastern and Arabic states would become, economically, ideologically, and, in our topic, in the realm of gender empowerment. Whereas the United Arab Emirates seemed comparatively well-progressed in the role that women play in their society, Saudi Arabia is comparatively lagging behind in terms of concrete policies and initiatives. Although restrictions on women, notably regarding driving, have been lifted, critics still lodge complaints at the regional powerhouse over the pace of its progress in gender emancipation. However, both countries are still notably affected by restrictive, monolithic “traditions” that shape law and policymaking in the region, most of which are designed to maintain the stake of power-holders (in this case, the patriarchal society of Arab tribes-then-nations) in equilibrium. Thus, although the UAE symbolically triumphs over Saudi Arabia due to its more “liberal” views, it is nonetheless constrained by the same traditions and antiquated values.

Despite all this, however, the increased voicing of concerns from young Arabs, both men and women, remains key to the development of newer policies in the region, be it Saudi Arabia or the UAE. However, most importantly, such changes would not come as a complete overhaul of the current underlying system (at least, at first), but instead come as a slow and steady progress that incorporates many of the preexisting cultural and societal customs, just as how Islamic laws and values helped shape the form that is modern Arabic culture.

REFERENCES

- Agboola, M. (2021). Female Labour Force Participation in Saudi Arabia and its Determinants. *Gospodarka Narodowa*, 305(1), 135–152.
<https://doi.org/10.33119/gn/132482>
- Aldeeb, N. R. (2021). An Intersectional Feminist Reading of The Dove's Necklace and Hend and the Soldiers. In *Memory, Voice, and Identity* (pp. 173–183). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003100164-20>
- Almalki, S. (2020). Parenting Practices in Saudi Arabia: Gender-Role Modeling. In *Parents and Caregivers Across Cultures* (pp. 231–246). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35590-6_16
- Al-Rasheed, M. (2010). A History of Saudi Arabia. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511993510>
- Al, H. M. K., Maamar, N., Al, F., & Hussein, G. (2025). Women Political Participation: The Model of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In *Sustainability, AI and Innovation*:

- Proceedings of the Applied Research in Humanities & Social Sciences (ARHSS 2023) (Issue Arhss). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2532-1>
- Alotaibi, N. H., Dasuki, S., & Zamani, E. (2021). M-Government, Wilaya and Women's Empowerment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 1st Virtual Conference on Implications of Information and Digital Technologies for Development, 487–499.
- Alzahrani, E., Gordon, J., Diaz-Garcia, C., & Keston-Siebert, S. (2026). Tribal Origin and Gender: Identity Work in Women's Entrepreneurial Journey in Saudi Arabia. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 33(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.70013>
- Alzaabi, M., & Yaiche, O. (2025). Women Political Participation: The Model of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In *Sustainability, AI and Innovation: Proceedings of the Applied Research in Humanities & Social Sciences (ARHSS 2023)* (pp. 363–384). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2532-1_19
- Amnesty.org. (2022). Saudi Arabia codifies male guardianship and gender discrimination - Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2022/12/saudi-arabia-codifies-male-guardianship-and-gender-discrimination/>
- Bimawan, H., Haeqhal, M., Marhadi, Rafi Kusuma F.R., & Try Rama Bagus Sanjaya. (2025). The Status of Pre-Islamic Arab Women: Reform and the Challenge of Fulfilling Women's Rights in Contemporary Islamic Family Law Practice. *Legitima : Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam*, 7(2), 237. <https://doi.org/10.33367/fv66cf88>
- Dahlgren, S., & Lindbekk, M. (2020). Introduction. *Hawwa*, 18(2–3), 117–142. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-12341374>
- Giladi, E. (2023). The ideal Muslim woman in the Saudi novel: idealism, counter-idealism, realism. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 59(4), 665–681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2022.2115481>
- Goby, V. P. (2026). Framing Emirati Womanhood: Heritage, Modernity, and Soft Power in Tourism Discourse. *International Conference on Tourism Research*, 9(1), 190–197. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ictr.9.1.4405>
- Haniffa, F. (2016). <scp>I</scp> slam and Gender. In *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (pp. 1–5). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss631>
- Hrw. (2023). Saudi Arabia: Law Enshrines Male Guardianship | Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/08/saudi-arabia-law-enshrines-male-guardianship>
- HRW. (2016). Boxed In: Women and Saudi Arabia's Male Guardianship System | HRW. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/17/boxed/women-and-saudi-arabias-male-guardianship-system>
- Louden-Cooke, S. (2024). Power, politics & resistance: secularism and women's marital rights in Egypt and Iran. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 51(5), 1011–1030. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2185591>
- Omair, M., Alharbi, A., Alshangiti, A., Tashkandy, Y., Alzaid, S., Almahmud, R., Almousa, M., Alenazi, E., Aldooh, F., & Binhazzaa, S. (2020). The Saudi women participation in development index. *Journal of King Saud University - Science*, 32(1), 1233–1245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jksus.2019.10.007>
- pchr. (n.d.). Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment in the UAE | PCHR | National... Retrieved July 2, 2026, from <https://pchr.gov.ae/en/priority-details/gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment>
- Riansyah, R. B. A., & Juned, M. (2024). Analyzing Arabia and Japan's Energy Security Activities within Saudi-Japan 2030 vision. *Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1996.03.01.108>

- STUDYLIB. (n.d.). Vision 2030 Annual Report 2025: Saudi Arabia's Progress. 2026. Retrieved July 2, 2026, from https://studylib.net/doc/28527114/vision2030-annual-report-2025-en?__cf_chl_f_tk=JnDzZNfp7CItq9oM7YIm4zoCG53dntHz82ZjeTUPySA-1782988843-1.0.1.1-RONe1CjY9VFGNFkdjXaU2hw63Dq7WWUJBylgYLVGc7w
- Syed, J., Ali, F., & Hennekam, S. (2018). Gender equality in employment in Saudi Arabia: a relational perspective. *Career Development International*, 23(2), 163–177. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-07-2017-0126>
- Tucker, J. E. (2020). Women's and Gender History in the Middle East and North Africa, 1750–World War I. In *A Companion to Global Gender History* (pp. 399–414). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119535812.ch24>
- uaelegislation. (2023). United Arab Emirates Legislations. <https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/policy/details/lsy-s-lotny-ltmkyn-lmra-fy-dol-l-m-r-t-laarby-lmthd-2023-2031>
- uaelegislation. (2024). United Arab Emirates Legislations | Federal Decree-Law On the Issuance of the Personal Status Law. <https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/2770>
- Wirayuda, A. A. B., Al-Mahrezi, A., & Chan, M. F. (2023). Comparing Life Expectancy Determinants between Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates from 1980–2020. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 13(7), 1293–1305. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe13070095>
- Worldbank. (2024). Saudi Arabia Women, Business and the Law 2024. In worldbank.
- Wright, A. (2025). 'The Immoral Traffic in Women.' In *Borders and Mobility in South Asia and Beyond* (pp. 145–165). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789462984547_CH06
- Zachs, & Halevi, S. (2015). *Gendering Culture In Greater Syria*. I.B.Tauris. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755608768>
- Zahlan, R. S. (1978). The Origins of the United Arab Emirates: A Political and Social History of the Trucial States.



ABOUT

SALASIKA etymologically derived from Javanese language meaning 'brave woman'. SALASIKA JOURNAL (SJ) is founded in July 2019 as an international open access, scholarly, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal publishing theoretically innovative and methodologically diverse research in the fields of gender studies, sexualities and feminism. Our conception of both theory and method is broad and encompassing, and we welcome contributions from scholars around the world.

SJ is inspired by the need to put into visibility the Indonesian and South East Asian women to ensure a dissemination of knowledge to a wider general audience.

SJ selects at least several outstanding articles by scholars in the early stages of a career in academic research for each issue, thereby providing support for new voices and emerging scholarship.

AUDIENCE

SJ aims to provide academic literature which is accessible across disciplines, but also to a wider 'non-academic' audience interested and engaged with social justice, ecofeminism, human rights, policy/advocacy, gender, sexualities, concepts of equality, social change, migration and social mobilisation, inter-religious and international relations and development.

There are other journals which address those topics, but SJ approaches the broad areas of gender, sexuality and feminism in an integrated fashion. It further addresses the issue of international collaboration and inclusion as existing gaps in the area of academic publishing by (a) crossing language boundaries and creating a space for publishing and (b) providing an opportunity for innovative emerging scholars to engage in the academic dialogue with established researchers.

STRUCTURE OF THE JOURNAL

All articles will be preceded by an abstract (150-200 words), keywords, main text introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion; acknowledgments; declaration of interest statement; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figures; figure captions (as a list); and a contributor biography (150 words). Word length is 4,000-10,000 words, including all previous elements.

TIMELINE AND SCHEDULE

Twice a year: December and June.

PUBLISHING AND COPYRIGHT APPROACH

All articles must not have been published or be under consideration elsewhere. We are unable to pay for permissions to publish pieces whose copyright is not held by the author. Contributors will be responsible for clearing all copyright permissions before submitting translations, illustrations or long quotes. The views expressed in papers are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the journal or its editors.

CONTENT ASSESSMENT

All articles will be peer-reviewed double-blind and will be submitted electronically to the journal (journal@salasika.org). The editors ensure that all submissions are refereed anonymously by two readers in the relevant field. In the event of widely divergent opinion during this process a third referee will be asked to comment, and the decision to publish taken on that recommendation. We expect that the editorial process will take up to four months. We will allow up to four weeks for contributors to send in revised manuscripts with corrections.



Published by:

**THE INDONESIAN ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN/GENDER & CHILD STUDIES.**

The Centre for Gender & Child Studies
Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (CGCS UKSW).
Jl. Diponegoro 52-60, Salatiga, 50711.

