

Sample research paper on women's rights in saudi arabia

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



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It is a man's world they say. There is no need for evidence to prove it. World over, gender inequality is the single most common and oldest social issue. Since the development of civilizations women have been treated as lower to men. Many cultures have followed this practice for so very long, and some societies follow it still with the same dedication as their ancestors. Gender inequality is a global issue and the Islamic state of Saudi Arabia is known for its gender biased policies and low representation of women in the work force and government organizations. There are many accounts of evidence that depict a gender bias in the working of the nation. This article is a discussion of the rights given to women in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is the ancestral home of the Nomadic tribes with a male dominated working system. Also it is an Islamic nation that follows the Sunni Islamic ways to derive all its rights and laws. Hence, the Saudi Arabian rights are derived from both tradition and religion. Women in Saudi Arabia had to face many situations in different walks of life where they were shown to be inferior to males. According to a Gender Inequality Index presented in United Nations Development Programme " Human Development Report" women in Saudi Arabia constitute 17% of the total working class, 50% of women over the age of 25 years have received secondary education, and 0% in case of political representation. Saudi Arabia is one of the few countries that have shown improvement in its Gender Inequality Index since 2008. However, this just the westernized approach to the equality rights and many individuals, including women in Saudi Arabia say otherwise to the laws in the country. Women in Saudi Arabia have to face the dual force of religion and tradition to exist and interact in the society (Jawhar). Although many claim that it is

more of the nomadic tribe like traditions of Saudi Arabia that cause more oppression than Islamic views. Nomadic traditions do not allow women to have an opinion in the administrative discussions and decisions. These traditions do not allow women to have jobs as well (Naim). Apart from economic stays, women had to live under subordination of their husbands and other family members (Jawhar). These and so many other similar traditions followed in Nomadic tribe cultures reflect in the Saudi Arabian society (Naim).

However, these age-old traditions are not the only reasons of the so called deep gender inequality in Saudi Arabia. In addition to the laws and traditions derived through the long drawn Nomadic tribal traditions, Sharia, the Islamic rules put down in Quran and hadith, the teachings from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) apply to the rules and rights conferred upon citizens in Saudi Arabia. However, there are no elaborate written laws that govern the working of the judiciary in Saudi Arabia (Naim). Judges interpret laws according to their discretion. This leads to controversy on many occasions, especially when laws related to women need to be interpreted. One example of such controversy is the interpretation of the Ikhtilat (Arabic for mixing) rules. The Ikhtilat rule forbids free mixing of the opposite genders. At times, some laws are drafted in support of the rules, while on other occasions the supporters are largely protested against. However, the rule applies and does not allow women to freely go around in society, attend social gatherings on their own without a full body “naqaab” or cover (Naim).

There are numerous examples of laws that show gender bias and unequal rights for women throughout the law records in Saudi Arabia. These

examples include ban on driving for women, no voting rights, male guardianship, hijab (social segregation of women) etc. However, this is more of a westernized perspective of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian women speak a completely different story. In polls conducted in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic nations, Saudi Arabian women showed a completely different response as compared to responses in other Islamic states (Jardine). Women said that they were satisfied with the way law provided rights to them and how Sharia applied rules and rights to their lives (Jardine). They even detested the westernized approach to equality, saying that it would mean a mixing of traditions and western ideas, which was not a favored idea for Saudi Arabian women (Jardine).

Saudi Arabian women in the present day are almost considered equal in educational terms. Nearly 80% of women are educated, a ratio very close to that of male education rate. Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University, the largest women's only university is situated in Saudi Arabia. Women are allowed to work, although they must follow hijab, the job must suit feminine physique's capacity and should be allowed by the male guardian. The most important aspect is the fact that women accept these terms and conditions voluntarily in most situations.

Since women choose to stay under such terms and conditions, rights for women need to be re-defined especially in terms of Saudi Arabian society. There is a need to understand that some universal rights lose significance in many situations. However, such laws which limit women from having a westernized "equality" approach may not find place in many societies in the world.

Works cited

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