

Gender discrimination  
still exists in today's  
era sociology essay



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Women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive. Husbands in Bahrain and Egypt can prevent their wives from traveling outside the country for any reason by filing a complaint at the airport. In Lebanon, abused women cannot file for divorce from their husbands on the basis of violence without the testimony of an eyewitness. The Human rights of women in the Middle East are constantly being ignored by the countries in that region. As a result, the women's political and social issues are not being addressed properly due to the cultural pressure the society demands of them. Hence, sexual discrimination exists in the Arab world. Most of the world's poor, unhealthy and uneducated are Arab women. They are constantly absent from negotiations regarding peace and security to end conflicts. Thus, Arab women are not given a chance to show their capabilities to shape the Middle Eastern society. Arab women's voice is simply not being heard.

Gender discrimination exists when a person or a group of people are treated improperly on the basis of their biological sex. In the Arab society, sexual discrimination exists due to different cultural values and attitudes between men and women. As a result, Arab society is man dominated causing women to hide behind their husbands. According to Tannen (1990), " Throughout the evening, one man had been particularly talkative, frequently offering ideas and anecdotes, while his wife sat silently beside him on the couch. Toward the end of the evening, I commented that women frequently complain that their husbands don't talk to them. This man quickly concurred. He gestured toward his wife and said, " She's the talker in our family." The room burst into laughter; the man looked puzzled and hurt. " It's true," he explained. " When I come home from work I have nothing to say. If she didn't keep the

conversation going, we'd spend the whole evening in silence."”(p. 159).

Tannen (1990) explained this paradox by stating “ In the public setting of a guest lecture, he felt challenged to show his intelligence and display his understanding of the lecture. But at home, where he has nothing to prove and no one to defend against, he is free to remain silent. For his wife, being home means she is free from the worry that something she says might offend someone, or spark disagreement, or appear to be showing off; at home she is free to talk” (p. 163). This example shows the irony that although Arab men tend to engage more in conversation than women in public situations, they usually talk less at home. This result in, as mentioned earlier, sexual discrimination and a man dominated society in the Middle East.

I was never aware that gender discrimination exists in the Arab world until recently. A month ago, I was looking for a job in the concerts being held in Abu Dhabi. I found a job that I was very interested in and matched my requirements perfectly. But to my surprise, I was not hired due to gender discrimination. Although I was eligible enough for that job, I was not hired because I am a woman. Another similar example was when I was working with my NGN 110 group on our ping pong ball sorter project. Because of my gender, the group leader decided to give me the responsibility of writing the final written report instead of working on designing and building the ping pong ball sorter with the rest of the group. Being a woman, I cannot work on constructing our project. However, the biggest example of sexual discrimination that I personally witnessed was when my aunt was pregnant with a girl. When a woman announces that she is pregnant with a boy, family

and friends show great excitement and enthusiasm. Arabs act that way only when a woman is pregnant with a boy and not a girl because, in Middle Eastern societies, a son means security. The son will inherit his father's properties and get a convenient job to help support the family. When a girl is born, however, the reaction is very different. A few women actually cry when they find out that they are expecting a girl because, to Arabs, a daughter is just another expense. Her place belongs at home, not in the world of men. Arab women's identities are formed as soon as their family and society limit their opportunities and declare them to be second place. Extreme bias against Arab women creates discrimination against them that keeps them from living up to their full potential. Personally, I cannot help but feel inferior when everything around me tells me that I am worth less than a man.

Middle Eastern societies are affecting Arab women negatively by not giving them a chance to shape the Arab society and show the world their innovative ideas. For instance, although Arab girls perform better at school than boys, they have fewer educational opportunities. According to MacLeod, "Lack of education and gender discrimination combine to keep the percentage of employed Arab women at only one-third, the lowest in the world" (2006, para. 5). Both of these factors contribute to an unhealthy lifestyle that increases the rate of disease and death related to pregnancy and childbirth. Women are not only largely excluded from political participation, but they also face domestic violence such as "honor killings". Furthermore, many governmental orders are being enforced to restrict Arab women's liberties. Such as giving women less status than their husbands in divorce papers and requiring their father or husband's permission to travel, work, or borrow

money from a bank. Additionally, sexual discrimination in Arabian societies is especially obvious in the workplace. Since women are equally qualified, if not more, than men, differences in qualification between Arab men and women no longer provide a reasonable explanation for why women earn less than men for the same amount of work. Obviously, sexual discrimination is a significant contributor to the pay gap between Arab men and women. If it was not for gender discrimination, Arab women would probably be earning just as much as or even more than men. Moreover, the employment of Arab women and men in different fields is also a result of sexual discrimination. For example, occupations such as nursing and administrative assisting are usually dominated by women, while fields such as engineering and politics tend to be dominated by men.

Gender is a common term meant for both sexes, whereas gender discrimination is a term meant only for women, since women are the only victims of sexual discrimination. Furthermore, gender discrimination is an ongoing problem in every country in the Middle East that we face in our daily lives. Females are nearly fifty percent of the total world population but their presentation in public life and their contribution to the society is extremely low. Recognizing Arab women's rights and believing in their abilities are essential for women's empowerment and development. A Middle Eastern nation, without the participation of both genders cannot achieve evolution. If we eliminate sexual discrimination and merge the two voices together, Arab women will deliver all the potentials, skills, and knowledge to develop the Middle Eastern societies.