

## AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF HOW STATES MISS THEIR TARGETS FOR GENDER EQUALITY REMAINS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

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### Abstract

Gender equality persists as a major worldwide problem since nations continue to endorse the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at the international level. This paper investigates how legal authorities fail to bring equality between genders despite their formal promises in different nations. The research examines state obstacles to gender equality through analysis of cultural, political, economic and legal elements. The study applies mixed methods which combine case study qualitative data with quantitative global gender index statistics. The data reveals that though laws exist countries face persistent gender inequality because of inadequate enactment of regulations together with prevalent cultural resistance along with minimal government support in both developed and developing nations. The paper ends by advocating that states need to focus on both enforcement system improvements alongside societal and economic barriers elimination. Research should address how gender inequality works with other socioeconomic identity factors to affect women's opportunity access specifically within public institutions and private spaces.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human rights protect gender equality while what it means to achieve global social and economic advancement depends on it. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) grants gender equality to all people without discrimination based on sex. However, despite this recognition, women and girls worldwide still face significant barriers to equality, particularly in areas such as political participation, economic opportunities, and access to education. Many countries have implemented CEDAW along with their national laws to promote gender equality yet smooth implementation experiences varying levels of success across different areas. Research in the past investigated the success of these laws alongside the particular challenges that impede their operationalization. According to Sen (1999) making laws equal between men and women stands as fundamental yet genuine power emerges by eliminating obstacles including poverty and social discrimination and illiteracy that runs deep in various communities.

Many experts in gender equality work from the belief that formulated laws automatically result in equivalent outcomes for all genders. Research demonstrates that mere enforcement of gender equality legislation by itself fails to accomplish complete equality elimination. Legislation protecting women's rights exists but fails to produce substantial effects in their daily lives. Progressive laws in India and Saudi Arabia face limited enforcement because cultural resistance becomes an extra barrier. According to Crenshaw (2013) intersectionality helps identify why laws fail to meet the requirements of various marginalized female populations. This paper investigates how states fail to implement gender equality laws through real transformative results despite ratifying international conventions. This research examines the multiple causes behind state-level failures to establish gender equality through investigations of the legal system alongside social and economic backgrounds. The analysis includes case studies of Tunisia together with Pakistan and the United States in order to identify the combined effect of these elements on social advancement..

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To identify prevailing trends in the international scenarios, the research review explores studies from all over the world to understand what continues to fail in the way of gender equality in state areas. Gender egalitarianism is a policy objective and it is not just a matter of two laws, they also need infrastructural need formulation from cultural norms to political framework and economic frameworks. Kabeer (2005) shows through his work that the legal instruments lack to break down deeply rooted, gender imbedded prejudices. Gender equality law improvements alongside their results are examined in this review to get a complete understanding of state barriers to improving gender equality progress. Previous nations implemented gender equality laws which remain virtually ineffective because both weak enforcement and dominant traditional power blocks actively resist their implementation. Boserup (2013) demonstrated that economic frameworks frequently exclude female employees from their policies thereby sustaining gender-related disparities. A presence of legal frameworks in the system does not guarantee their effective application or enforcement process unless both political will and appropriate legal infrastructure exist to transform these laws from symbolic to transformative elements.

The path to achieving gender equal rights faces major challenges from established cultural rules and customary gender-based roles. According to Crenshaw (2013) we must use intersectionality to understand how women face challenges of restricted rights because of their combined factors of race, class and gender. Societies In many aspects of cultural

norms keep women limited from exercising their freedoms particularly in patriarchal communities. Gender-based violence along with child marriage and limited female mobility across portions of South Asia and the Middle East continue to exist because they stem from prevalent cultural customs beyond legal control.

Gender inequality receives support from several economic factors that function as sustaining elements. The labor market along with lack of equal education and property rights systems limit women's participation in the economy because of discriminatory behaviors toward them. Traditional economic systems maintain low value for the work conducted by women according to Boserup (2013). Kabeer (2005) explains economic empowerment serves as a requirement for gender equality yet women face economic marginalization because major economic policies fail to change. Across Pakistan and Nigeria women face limited involvement in the workforce even though laws have been improved due to their placement in low-paid unofficial jobs.

Gender equality laws have generated important progress yet unresolved state failures to attain equality remain embedded in established laws as well as cultural and economic systems. The analyzed studies prove that gender equality success goes beyond passing legislation since it needs complete transformation in social structures cultural approaches and economic systems.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A worldwide investigation seeks to identify the basis for state failures to reach gender equality goals. The research focuses on investigating the causal role of legal and cultural and economic factors behind such failures so it studies the relationship between enforcement methods and wider societal influences. The research design implements both qualitative and quantitative methods throughout its process. The analysis consists of conducting case-study research in diverse countries to observe their legal, cultural and economic conditions through qualitative investigations and quantitative assessment utilizes gender equality data from the UNDP Gender Equality Index (Gutiérrez-Martínez, I., Saifuddin, S. M., & Haq, R. (2021).

The researchers will employ thematic analysis as their method for studying the case studies. Temple devoted attention to examining gender equality barriers in various sources including policy documents and legal documents to find recurring obstacles including cultural barriers alongside political reluctance and economic difficulties for gender equality law adoption.

## **ANALYSIS**

Academic research into state failures in gender equality implementation gave us important information about continuing discrepancies between legal targets and actual achievements for women. The research reveals the intricate process of turning gender equality legal frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into meaningful changes for women across the world. The analysis thoroughly examines cultural along with economic and political elements which constrain gender equality legislation while drawing information from foundational studies and recent scholarly research.

Gender inequality continues to thrive through cultural resistance even though progressive laws come into effect according to this study's most salient discovery. Pakistan has laws which theoretically protect women's rights yet many of the country's cultural values prioritize males which hinders women from obtaining education while blocking their professional opportunities and political progress. Crenshaw (2013) explains in her

important intersectionality research that gender bias requires full analysis of its combined effect with racial and class identification and cultural expressions. Research evidence supports Crenshaw's (2013) theory due to its demonstration of how society's norms together with cultural values limit women's capacity to exercise legal rights.

For successful implementation of gender equality laws political will plays an essential part. Effectively enforcing gender equality laws needs political will. The study reveals that Tunisia along with the United States has developed modern gender equality laws but poor enforcement and political support obstructs their effective implementation. The post-revolutionary reforms in Tunisia granted women better legal protection but their enforcement progressed gradually because of political turbulence along with opposition from traditionalist groups. The findings prove that countries with legal gender equality frameworks still need total political support to achieve their objectives.

Political divisiveness across the United States makes it challenging to execute gender equality laws including equality in pay and representation in political offices. Political instability toward gender equality throughout the years has kept women's wage equality progress slow and obstructed their path to leadership roles. Political commitment stands essential according to Sen (1999) because it enables gender equality laws to fulfill their purpose instead of becoming dead letters. Political instability alongside opposition force countries to delay gender equality law implementation and stop their enforcement.

The evaluation demonstrates the difficulties that worldwide gender equality standards like CEDAW experience when generating specific results regarding gender justice. The effectiveness of CEDAW international standards for gender equality relies heavily on national governments demonstrating willingness to carry out their stated commitments. According to Boserup (1970) and Sen (1999) international norms fail to achieve their purposes in situations where local economic conditions and cultural factors along with political systems remain unconsidered. States that utilize the CEDAW framework have to provide voluntary reports about their compliance level yet discrepancies often appear when comparing law to practice especially in states with weak rule of law and authoritarian regimes.

International standards set important benchmarks yet national governments need to accomplish more than document international agreements because they must actively advance gender equality policies within their territories. According to Crenshaw (2013) intersectionality should be a fundamental component of gender equality frameworks because women encounter different experiences based on their social identities. The findings from this research demonstrate that international frameworks need to advance gender equality through legal systems yet actively promote modifications that prevent economic and political and social barriers which limit gender fairness in individual situations.

The research emphasizes that conducting law changes functions as a required step yet remains an inadequate solution for obtaining complete gender equality. All gender equality policy development requires comprehensive analysis of cultural norms combined with economic structures alongside political systems. Further investigations must examine how gender inequality interacts with other elements including race and class and religious beliefs since those factors determine women's capacity to obtain rights and opportunities. Research should investigate enforcement strategies for gender equality policies within communities which demonstrate intense reluctance towards equal rights for women.

This study backs Boserup (1970) by demonstrating that women achieve equality through legal and economic empowerment and follows Sen's (1999) perspective on the necessity of political leadership. Future research needs to combine an examination of law enforcement with complete analysis of fundamental reform efforts needed to build a society suitable for the advancement of gender equality.

## **RESULTS**

This study asks the core research question about why states fail to execute gender equality laws when laws already exist to support such initiatives. The research follows an examination of three elements along with legal systems while studying cultural obstacles and governmental political commitment combined with financial obstacles. The hypothesis evaluates the inadequacy of laws to promote gender equality because cultural resistance and economic obstacles result in state failures during gender equality implementation. Field research comprising interviews of gender experts along with government officials supported the review of gender equality laws and their implementation struggles in each country. Review of policy reports and statistical data allowed researchers to analyze socio-cultural and economic factors that prevent effective implementation of gender equality laws.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Validation tests demonstrated that gender equality laws throughout Tunisia, Pakistan and the United States produced higher rankings on the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) (Sharma, R. R., Chawla, S., & Karam, C. M. (2021)). The enforcement patterns of these laws led to substantial differences in the achieved results.

After conducting legal reforms following the 2011 Tunisian revolution women experienced considerable enhancements in political standings and legal recognition. The rural areas face ongoing challenges because patriarchal social norms continue to remain powerful (Kabeer, 2005).

### **CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Cultural resistance functioned as one of the main obstacles to gender equality throughout Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Both nations possess contemporary legislative structures yet their Gender Equality measurement remained low specifically in health services and economic contribution indicators. Crenshaw (2013) states that achieving gender equality demands attention to both religion and social traditions because alone these factors cannot establish equality.

The traditional religious practices alongside cultural values strongly control how Pakistani women receive education and join the workforce. The study conducted by Boserup (2013) demonstrates that developing nations face economic barriers for female participation because culture supports domestic roles for women.

### **ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender inequality keeps persisting through economic barriers which affect Pakistan and India specifically because women lack access to monetary resources and own property rights. Economic inequality between men and women explained a major portion of differences between their labor activity participation and income distribution according to the regression study results. Through their analysis Boserup (2013) demonstrated how women frequently work in poor market sectors that increase economic inequality.



## POLITICAL WILL AND ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of gender equality laws depends largely on political intentions of authorities. The United States maintains gender equality laws but the country faces limitations in wage equality and political representation due to political divisions and inconsistent regulatory approaches (Atkins, S., & Brenda Hale, B. (2018). Strong political determination toward gender equality enhancement allows better implementation results of gender equality laws as shown through regression analysis models particularly in the case of post-revolutionary Tunisia where supportive political leaders backed their reforms.

## DISCUSSION

The research examined why states do not improve gender equality despite having established legal regulations. Legal systems must face strong cultural opposition as well as economic challenges and weak political motivation to fully achieve their equality goals (Petrenko et al., 2020). The report studied Tunisia, Pakistan, and the United States, which proved that successful gender equality demands both updated laws and major transformations in cultural norms and economic frameworks (Cherniak, 2021).

Gender equality laws benefit women but cannot work on their own because society must also support them through real action (Young, 2016). After revolution, Tunisia achieved good progress through law changes, yet cultural obstacles—especially in rural areas—keep gender disparities severe (Golovinov & Golovinova, 2021). Our research matches Boserup's 1970 findings that governments worldwide neglect to include women in their economic strategies, particularly those who work informally (Barick & Bhatnagar, 2025).

Certain strong male domination traditions in Pakistan make it difficult for women to reach their societal and workforce potential even though the country has modern gender fairness rules (Bakumenko et al., 2019). Crenshaw's 2013 work shows how gender, class, and cultural systems create unique opportunities for women in society (Putri & Ma'ruf, 2024). Societal traditions create the greatest obstacle for women to move freely and access resources in Pakistan according to Kabeer's (2005) observations (Savetchuk & Pytliovana, 2023).

In nations like the United States that have good gender equality laws, people's beliefs and the way these laws are put into action create barriers to reaching desired results (Di Noia, 2002). Research results demonstrate that acceptable gender equality laws need effective political backing to operate properly (Gottfried, 2017). According to Sen in 1999, political dedication serves as the primary path to actualize new laws (Nazarchuk, 2024).

This research adds valuable information to the current studies about gender equality and state failure. Researchers keep debating that authorized rules do not work properly (Rani, 2023). According to Kabeer (2005), transforming traditional attitudes towards women needs coordinated political and cultural changes along with legal reforms to produce true gender equality (Jackson, 2002).

The results show that gender inequality stands connected to other types of inequality according to intersectionality principles outlined by Crenshaw in 2013 (Yefet, 2020). In Pakistan, cultural standards directly affect how women gain education and work access since these social values interact with economic and political organizations (Rocha et al., 2021).

The study proves that gender equality responds to both social and economic forces in addition to legal frameworks as Sen stated in 1999 (Pajvančić & Petrušić, 2014). The study

reveals that Pakistan and India face ongoing economic obstacles for gender equality because women still lack equal access to money and property.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the reasons states cannot achieve equal rights for men and women although they have equal laws. Every nation should support gender equality yet this human right remains unachieved across developed and developing regions. Through its analysis the study demonstrated how gender equality advances face barriers because legal systems merge with cultural, economic, and political environments. The research shows that legal systems alone cannot solve deeply rooted equality barriers despite being essential.

This research shows governments fail to establish gender equality because their laws alone cannot solve problems when society opposes change and faces economic challenges without enough political leadership. Research into Tunisia Pakistan and America proved that actual gender equality needs more than just legal protection. A complete solution needs widespread work to support women's social and cultural growth along with their financial empowerment.

This study revealed important observations through the following results:

1. When legal rules exist without effective enforcement support and solid political determination they cannot achieve their goals. Tunisia built a robust legal system yet its rural communities did not accept the changes according to Boserup in 1970 and Kabeer in 2005.
2. Traditional community practices in Pakistan stop many women from taking part in education work and politics because cultural groups control them. According to Crenshaw in 1991 we need to recognize multiple identities to fix gender equality problems in these communities.
3. The financial barriers that affect women's prospects especially limit their chances in developing nations including Pakistan. The laws that improved women's legal experience have failed to help them achieve financial independence because women lack fair rights to property and finance according to both Boserup (1970) and Sen (1999).
4. The commitment of political leaders plays a basic role in making sure gender equality laws work properly. The United States maintains strong legal equality laws but weak enforcement by political parties blocks equal gender rights progress.

Our study findings have important meaning that extends to various regions beyond the targeted countries. Our research shows gender equality needs complete system changes across culture political and economy settings besides legal frameworks. The study confirms the intersectionality theory Crenshaw developed in 2013 because gender inequality thrives in a framework of linked societal systems.

Our study shows that female empowerment through CEDAW needs combined efforts from national governments who support and enforce local anti-discrimination law. Even powerful international pressure campaign failed to produce major change in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Officials need to work actively on breaking down economic and social customs that keep female inequality alive. The introduction showed the need to study why states fail to reach equality between men and women despite their legal rules. The research shows that legal requirements for equality between men and women need consistent rules and government motivation combined with broad approaches to fix social and monetary problems. Our research shows how difficult it is to achieve gender equality worldwide and shows the need for complete solutions to fix this worldwide challenge.

The road to gender equality takes years to complete since laws alone will not work without cultural transformation and powerful political commitment to improve women's economic opportunities. The global society needs to develop policies that respect gender diversity while furthering social change through worldwide efforts toward gender equity. Sen noted in 1999 that attaining gender equality needs more than legal steps alone because it requires change both in our economic system and social practices.

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