GIRL POWER IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES: DOES ISLAM PREVENT

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN

GOVERNMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

In many majority Muslim countries, women are prevented from fully participating in social life and are excluded from participation in government at significant levels. Yet, social and political exclusion of women in Muslim societies does vary on a continuum from more to less oppressive. Not all majority Muslim countries have the same level of exclusion. This study attempts to understand what factors prevent or promote women's participation in government in majority Muslim countries. Specifically, I analyze how female educational and employment opportunities impact the percentage of women in parliament in majority Muslim countries, and further, how the degree to which Islam dictates governmental institutions mediates these relationships. In order to explore these dynamics, I select three cases with varying degrees of Islamic influence in government: Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. I develop a dataset ranging from 2005 to 2009, which allows me to test these relationships. I find that there is no direct negative relationship between Islam and women's representation in parliament. However, when there is an increased presence of women in the work force the relationship between Islam and women in parliament is significant and positive. In other words, women's employment opportunities mediate the relationship between Islamic governance and women in parliament.

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INTRODUCTION

For decades scholars have hypothesized and debated over what prevents democracy from fully developing in countries with majority Muslim populations. A fundamental aspect of a successful democracy is the inclusion and participation of all citizens. An important question to ask then is why are women largely excluded from or limited in the political sphere in most Muslim countries.

Understanding the intersection of family and public life is key to unveiling the exclusion of women from state government. The core of gender relations in Muslim countries lies in traditional definitions of patriarchy, often defined as the ideology that a woman's proper role is in the home with the family. The family paradoxically promotes and suppresses women, as women are praised caregivers of children and the home but also subjugated to the decision making of men within and outside of the home (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001). As private family life is the foundation of a Muslim woman's social location, the patriarchal tradition inevitably follows her into public life, dictating which actions and pursuits are acceptable according to various male figures in her life.

In addition to traditional patriarchy where women are given no choices outside of the home, Valentine Moghadam refers to "neopatriarchy" in Muslim societies in which women have the structural legal rights in both the public and private realms of society, yet despite modernization, they remain oppressed and regulated by male authoritarianism (2003). Neopatriarchy is certainly applicable to many Muslim states today. The longevity of patriarchy within Muslim societies has placed many Muslim women in a dichotomy of state and civil responsibility where they are defined as full citizens with equal rights but are valued for promoting national values, such as those values

promulgated by traditional patriarchy, not necessarily exercising their political rights. In most Muslim countries, defending national values is synonymous with traditional patriarchal notions that women belong in the home taking care of the family. Thus, the patriarchal control over women is intrinsic to citizenship in many Muslim countries (Moghadam 2003).

Despite this, women were crucial to the independence movements of many majority Muslim states, including Turkey, Egypt and Iran—the three countries on which I focus in this study. Women's movements were critical to the spread of nationalism at the time of each of these countries' independence. However, once the newly independent regimes were in place, the influence of women's movements in political life declined rapidly (Moghadam 2003). This begs the question: under what conditions are women able to sustain their engagement in and influence over government in majority Muslim countries? In other words, what factors prevent or promote women's access to government in majority Muslim countries? Is it the presence of Islam in government itself that prevents women from taking leadership roles in politics, or is it the lack of access to education and employment outside of the home?

The purpose of this study is to begin to answer these questions. Specifically, I seek to understand the relationship between Islam and women's political participation in national government, and how women's educational and economic opportunities mediate this relationship. I develop a theoretical framework that seeks to systematically understand the complex relationships between these variables. My theory addresses the relationship between the presence of Islam in government, women's development indicators (i.e., women's education and employment) and women's representation in

parliament, and suggests that when there is an increased influence of Islam in government, there will be fewer female representatives in parliament. However, increased women's development in terms of education and employment will act mediating as variables in the relationship between Islam and women in parliament. In other words, in majority Muslim countries where women have higher rates of education and employment, the impact of Islam on women's representation in parliament will be significantly diminished.

In order to test these relationships, I select three cases with varying degrees of Islamic influence in government: Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. I develop a dataset ranging from 2005 to 2009 that codes for the relevant variables. I find very promising results in support of my theory. The results suggest that it is not Islamic influence in government itself that suppresses women's representation in parliament; rather, it is limitations placed on women entering the workforce that is the largest inhibitor of women's political leadership in Islamic countries.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I develop my theory of Islam and women in government, which derives four hypotheses. Second, I discuss my empirical approach to testing these hypotheses. I then analyze the results, and I conclude with implications of this research and areas for future development.

THEORY

Women's political participation and representation in government generally relies on a combination of events, regardless of the society or country in question. The factors generating the pool of women who can participate in government are essentially the same

across the world. In an analysis of gender in politics, Paxton, Kunovich and Hughs refer to these factors as supply-side factors and demand-side factors (2007). The supply-side factors determine the pool of women with the will and experience to compete against their male counterparts in political elections. The supply-side of the pool of women eligible for election to office require political interest and ambition, political knowledge, time, networks, civil skills, education, and most importantly money. Many of these credentials can be acquired through certain employment opportunities that provide women with financial resources, civic skills, and networking abilities (Paxton, Kunovich & Hughs 2007).

The demand-side factors effecting women eligible for political office emphasize the characteristics of a country, electoral system or political party that affects the likelihood that a woman will be elected out of the supply of candidates. Theoretically, in a democratic system where elections uphold a set of transparent rules, women are more likely to understand and develop a strategy in order to gain the most support to become elected. However, in an authoritarian system where the rules of the political game are less clear, women would be less likely to successfully work within the political system.

A third important factor in their study is culture. Culture determines the beliefs and attitudes that influence both the supply and demand of female candidates.[1] Cultural influences imbedded in both the societal and individual level impact women in every aspect of the political process, whether it be a woman deciding to run for office, women's representation throughout the political sphere, party selection of female candidates, or the decision of voters during elections (Paxton, Kunovich & Hughs 2007). Essentially,

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[1] A deeper discussion of culture is beyond the scope of this analysis. Although culture is a broad term, here it can be understood as widespread beliefs and attitudes throughout society, including attitudes towards gender roles and norms.

women's ability to participate in government and be elected to political office relies on supply-side factors like education and employment opportunities, and demand-side factors, including government and cultural norms that foster egalitarianism and universal opportunity. If either supply or demand factors are absent, women's access to positions of authority in government will be lacking.

I will develop these ideas further by first discussing the supply-side factors of education and labor force participation on women's participation in government. I will then move to demand-side factors in the context of Muslim-majority countries, specifically the role of Islamic control or influence on government and how that impacts women's opportunity for political leadership. Finally, I will weave these variables into a narrative about the mediating role of female education and employment on women's political leadership in Islamic countries.

Education

Education is the catalyst of social status in any society. Studies show that education is fundamental to human progress and development and impacts the ability to perceive one's social location and mobility in a variety of ways (Moghadam 2003). Educated individuals develop greater civic skills such as communication and organizational abilities that allow individuals to become more effective citizens. The more education an individual attains, the more access that individual will have to jobs that provide even greater opportunities to develop and use a civic skill set (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba 1994). Such skills are imperative in the development of an active and knowledgeable population in a democracy.

Gender discrimination in educational attainment prevents women from accessing employment opportunities that develop civic skills at the same rate as men. Thus, it is clear that women are structurally disadvantaged in societies where the education of young girls and women is less valued than the education of boys and men, as seen in many Muslim societies (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba 1994).

When women are highly educated and employed in a state, it leads to an increase in female decision makers in society (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba 1994). On the other hand, women who are not afforded the same educational opportunities as men lack not only the skills and experience needed to enter politics, but also are prevented from entering politics because of patriarchal gender norms that prohibit women from being public leaders (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba 1994). Thus, in societies where women have access to high levels of education, there should be more women in political leadership. I therefore arrive at my first hypothesis:

H1: The higher the percentage of women achieving a tertiary level education, the higher the proportion of women in parliament in Muslim majority countries.

Labor Force

Spierlings, Smits and Verloo's study on women's absolute and relative participation in the work force shows that countries with higher overall economic development have a higher total percentage of women in the labor force (2009). Further, modernization and democracy have a significant impact on the number of women in the work force compared to the number of men. However, the study also indicates that Islamization has a negative effect of women's participation in the labor force compared to their male counterparts, although it had no significant effect on women's total work

force participation. Thus, Spierlings, Smits and Verloo conclude that state Islamization appears to be negatively related to gender equality in terms of women's work force participation compared to that of men and that democracy is positively correlated with women's relative work force participation (2009).

Women in the labor force in Muslim societies experience both positive and negative effects of female integration. Women who are employed experience a greater participation in decision-making in their households, as well as an increased sense of personal autonomy in the public sphere (Moghadam 2003). On the other hand, it is mostly middle and upper-middle-class women who are able to participate in the work force. Even among those women, however, there is limited access to mobility in the work place. As a result of the marginalization of women in the labor market, the economic status of women in the work force is significantly diminished compared to their male counterparts (Moghadam 2003).

Schlozman, Burns and Verba's study on gender resources in the work force shows that men have a cumulative advantage in skills gained from work that lead to increased political awareness and participation (1994). Further, the study states that Muslim men report more opportunities than Muslim women to gain and practice the skills necessary to participate in government largely because men are more likely to have jobs, are more likely to work full time, and are more likely to have jobs that require formal education and training (Schlozman, Burns & Verba 1994). This research taken together leads me to my second hypothesis:

H2: The higher the percentage of women in the workforce, the higher the proportion of women in parliament in Muslim majority countries.

Islam and Democracy

Literature regarding women's status in society and politics provides clear evidence that women who are more educated and employed are more likely to participate in government. Education and employment provide women with more personal autonomy in the public sphere by giving them the skills and resources they need to become active in government and politics. Studies have shown that education and economic independence through employment have a statistically significant positive effect on participation in political activities (Spierlings, Smits, & Verloo 2009).

Although this is true for many countries across the globe, research also shows that Muslim countries show variation in the representation of women's political participation (Spierlings, Smits, & Verloo 2009; Fish 2002). Some scholars identify Shari'a law as the foundation of women's oppression in Muslim societies. Shari'a demands that state law and government protect the honor of society, and this is used to justify, in most cases, the continuous structural oppression of women in many Muslim states (Moghadam 2003). The implication, therefore, is that Shari'a law contradicts contemporary ideas about women's rights and gender equality (Othman 2006). Thus, it is plausible to assert that when Islamic ideology influences government and policy-making, women in government and society will similarly be suppressed by such patriarchal Islamic traditions. I therefore arrive at my third hypothesis:

H3: Muslim countries with Islamic governments will have less female representation in parliament than Muslim countries with secular governments.

However, while I expect that there is a direct positive relationship between education and employment and women in parliament, and a direct negative relationship

between Islamic governance and women in parliament, I also expect that, when women

in countries with Islamic governance are able to gain access to tertiary education and

employment opportunities, the impact of Islam on women in parliament actually becomes

insignificant. In other words, education and employment for women mediate the

relationship between Islamic governance and women in parliament.

In Stephen Fish's analysis of Islam and authoritarianism, Fish suggests that the

subordination of women, rather than the presence of Islam in government, is what leads

Muslim countries to be consistent democratic underachievers (2002). Building on Fish's

analysis, it is plausible to suggest that, even in states with Islamic governance, when

women have educational and employment opportunities, the impact of Islam on women's

participation in government will be negligible.

Women's Development Indicators

Islam

Women in Government
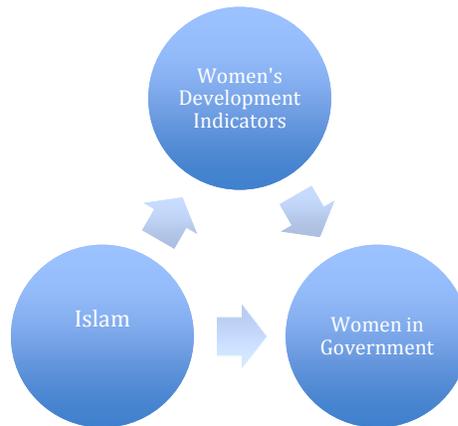
Thus, I argue that, while the presence of Islamic government does have a direct

suppressing effect on women in parliament, when women in Islamic societies are

educated and employed, the effect of Islamic governance on women in parliament will no

longer matter. In other words, similar to Fish, it is not Islamic government that

suppresses women, but the lack of developmental opportunities to participate in public life through education and employment.

H4: When women have educational and employment opportunities, the impact of Islamic governance on women in parliament will be negligible.

<div align="center">CASE STUDIES</div>

In order to test my hypotheses, I have chosen to develop three case studies of Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. The primary requirement for the three case studies I selected to develop is that they have a majority Muslim population. This requirement is set to insure that the data collected for this study derives from a majority of women subscribing to Islam. Next, each country must have or have had an Islamic tradition in government at some point in time. Finally, each country must be a democracy in the sense that it elects a national parliament.

Turkey, Iran and Egypt each fit my required criteria and display a continuum of social progress for women. Although each of these regimes at some point in time has exhibited authoritarian characteristics, each currently holds parliamentary elections. It is important to note that even if representatives in parliament have limited influence in these regimes, having female representatives present in the institution remains significant and is critical for the social progress of women, as they have a greater power to usurp patriarchal social and political traditions through a legitimate means.

Turkey, the only secular regime in this study, has comparatively liberal women's rights as a Muslim country, Iran is undoubtedly the most oppressive toward women as well as the most religiously conservative, and Egypt has recently undergone a revolution,

where it is unclear what the future of the government or women's rights will be. I will proceed with a discussion of women's rights and engagement in civic life in each of these countries as a backdrop to understand the social and political attitudes of modern women in Turkey, Iran and Egypt.

Turkey

Of the three countries in this study, Turkey exhibits the most gender equality over time. There are key distinctions in Turkey's history that have opened the public sphere to women. As far back as the early 19th century, Turkey has traditionally been more open to the West as a model of political, economic and social modernization (Mello & Strausz 2011; Arat 1998). In 1923, the Turkish Republic was founded. Although the majority of the population is Muslim, the Turkish Republic is not an Islamic government. After gaining independence, major policy reforms were passed designed to promote gender equality among the Turkish people. Women were granted the right to vote in local elections in 1930 and the right to vote in and be elected in national elections in 1934 (Mello & Strausz 2011).

After a wave of feminism in the 1980s, the Turkish government signed CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in 1985 at the United Nations final Decade for Women conference (Mello & Strausz 2011). The feminist movement of the 1980's consisted of mostly educated, middle-class professionals focused on raising awareness about gender issues in a political context, leading to the acceptance of formal membership for women in political parties in the mid 1980s (Arat 1998; Moghadam 2007). For the first time since women had been granted

the right to vote and be elected in national elections, a woman, Tansu Çiller, was elected prime minister of Turkey in 1993 (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001).

Counter to the secular feminist movement in Turkey is the Islamist women's movement that promotes the realization of the will of God among Turkish women. The Islamist women's movement ignited a rise of Islamic political ideology among women in Turkey and actually lead to an increase of women covering their heads as an expression of this ideology (Arat 1998). Both the secular feminists and the Islamist women's movements, however, recognize the need for gender equality in Turkey. While the feminists promote equal rights and female liberation free of all religious constraints, the Islamist feminists face the more difficult task of challenging patriarchal interpretations of Islam that have existed for centuries (Arat 1998).

Although there has been much progress for women's rights in Turkey, there are still significant indicators of inequality such as lower levels of political representation, violence against women, increased illiteracy rates among women, and decreased work force participation (Mello & Strausz 2011). As seen through the ratification of CEDAW, Turkey has the structural and legal opportunities for the advancement of women. However, strict cultural and religious traditions that oppress women remain prominent in Turkish society, as the state continues to define women's primary role in society as mothers and caretakers (Mello & Strausz 2011).

Iran

Iran serves as the most extreme example of Islamic conservatism in this study. After World War I, the Iranian people exhibited a resistance to the "modernization" campaign initiated by the United States. With a rise of Islamism, the Iranian people

attempted to reclaim their Islamic culture and national identity. As a result of the wave of Islamic nationalism, there was a halt in women's development in the public sphere, as Shari'a law dictates that the role of women is in the private home under the control of their husbands or men in their families (Bahramitash 2003). In the 1960s and 70s, however, the Iranian government began to embrace political and social modernization with an increasing focus on women's development. In 1962, Iranian women were granted the right to vote, and in 1967 the Iranian government passed the Family Protection Act limiting polygamy, allowing women to file for divorce, and allowing child custody rights to women after divorce or death of the husband (Moghadam 2003).

Political Islamists in Iran, which included a significant portion of the female population, began protesting the government's shift toward modernization and westernization and eventually overthrew the government in the Islamic Revolution. In 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran was created (Bahramitash 2003). The new Islamic government had a serious impact on the status of women in Iranian society. As the conservative religious interpretation of the role of women was adopted by the state, women became increasingly limited in social and political life where they had previously been making progress. Women were banned from certain professions, and women who kept their jobs were intensely discriminated against for violating the strict religious codes on women's role in society (Bahramitash 2003).

The Islamic constitution created after the revolution is inherently biased against women, as it states that all individuals should have equal access to employment no matter their race, sex or language, *so long as that access does not violate Islamic principles*. Because of this qualification in the Iranian constitution, men are largely given priority

over women in the work force (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001). Modern women, including the women who contributed to the Islamic Revolution as well as Islamic feminists, began to challenge the oppressive laws preventing them from fully participating in public life. For example, many women who once helped the new Islamic Republic come into power began demanding access to higher education and employment as compensation for their services (Bahramitash 2003; Joseph & Slyomovics 2001). Feminist movements continued to pressure the Iranian government for equal access to employment for women throughout the remaining decades of the 20th century, and successfully overturned many state laws discriminating against women in the work force (Bahramitash 2003).

In 2005, however, Mohammad Ahmadinejad was elected as the president of Iran. Under the Ahmadinejad regime, state policies have been undoing the reforms for women's rights brought on by women's movements in Iran. Using the rejection of Westernization as justification and a misuse of Shari'a law, the Ahmadinejad regime has implemented policies creating strict dress codes for women and limited access to education and employment (Hoodfar & Sadr 2010).

Egypt

Egypt gained independence in 1922 after successfully overthrowing British colonial rule (CIA World Fact Book). The women's movement in Egypt came to the forefront as a symbol of Egyptian nationalism at the time of Egypt's independence. The Feminist Union was formed in 1924 because newly elected male political representatives refused to campaign for women's rights after independence. Egypt's Feminist Union fought for equal access to education, legal rights and women's health awareness among the population. The Feminist Union was crucial in working with political parties in the

late 1940s to help push the British fully out of Egypt's Suez Canal zone (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001).

After the British had completely retreated from Egypt, the Arab Republic of Egypt was successfully created in 1953 (CIA World Fact Book). In 1954, the Nasser administration passed Labor Law 91, guaranteeing equal rights and wages to women and offered special accommodations to married women and mothers (Moghadam 2003). Egyptian women were granted the right to vote and be elected in 1956 (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001).

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the secular feminist movement spearheaded significant social progress for women in Egypt, including increased access to education and employment opportunities and taking on a wide array of roles in the public sphere. In response to the secular feminist movement in Egypt, Islamist women created the Society of Muslim Sister, later known as the Muslim Sisters, in 1930 (Moghadam 2003). In the 1970s and 80s, a rise of social conservativism was fueled by Islamic ideology, and much of the progress made by the feminist movement in Egypt was reversed, reinstating the traditional role of women in the home. Additionally, the Islamist women of Egypt initiated the movement to re-veil in support of Islamic religious and political ideology (Moghadam 2003). The veil was seen by Islamist women as a way to fully participate in public life while maintaining Islamic principles.

Like Turkey, Egypt ratified CEDAW in 1985 under pressure of Islamic feminists in the state. However, Egyptian representatives at the UN conference voiced certain reservations about addressing gender inequality in a legal context, asserting that CEDAW conditions must comply with Shari'a law in order to function properly in Egypt (Brandt

& Kaplan, 1996). CEDAW conditions require that countries eliminate discrimination against women in access to employment, education, and among marriage and family. Egyptian representatives feared that formalizing these conditions in a legal context would negate the dominant Islamic tenant that women are valued as caretakers of the home. However, scholars suggest that Egyptian representatives voicing concern over conflicting stipulations indicates a true interest in addressing gender inequality in a way that will be most successful among the dominant Muslim population (Brandt & Kaplan 1996).

Understanding the history of gender equality and the complex dynamic between women and Islamic religious and political ideology provides greater insight on the array of issues affecting women's political participation in Muslim countries. The historical background of women's rights in each of the three cases offers a foundation upon which to better understand the empirical data analyzed in this study.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH

My research begins with an analysis of the societal factors impacting the level of women's political leadership in Turkey, Iran and Egypt. My unit of analysis is each country in a year ranging from 2005 to 2009.[2] My dependent variable is women's political leadership and is measured as percentage of women elected to parliament in each country. The data for women's representation in parliament is derived from the United Nations Statistics Division statistical database.

There are three independent variables of interest: women's education, women's employment, and Islamic governance. It is suspected that an increase in these women's

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[2] There are only 15 observations in this dataset, which is a major limitation of this study. Nevertheless, interesting trends do emerge in the data that can be triangulated with and understood in the context of the more qualitative understanding of women's empowerment trends in each of these countries.

development indicators (education and employment) will lead to increased political

leadership by women. Education is measured by the percentage of tertiary education

attained by women.[3] The data for women's educational attainment is taken from the

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for

Statistics and the World Bank Open Data. Women's participation in the labor force is

measured as the percentage of women ages 20-54 participating in the labor force.[4] The

data for women's representation in the labor force is taken from the International Labour

Organization ILOSTAT Database.

    The other independent variable of interest is Islamic governance. While all of the

countries in this study elect parliaments and have a majority Muslim population, they

vary in terms of the influence of Islamic law on government and governance. Therefore,

I include an ordinal variable that codes each country based on the level of Islamic

governance. Specifically, Turkey is coded 1, Egypt is coded 2, and Iran is 3. Turkey has

the most secular government and Iran has the most Islamic.

    In addition to the primary variables of interest for the study, I also control for

GDP per capita. Data for GDP per capita was taken from the United Nations Statistical

Division statistical database. GDP per capita is controlled in this study because

modernization theory suggests that economic development directs value systems toward

democracy and gender equality (Inglehart 1997; Spierlings, Smits, & Verloo 2009). Thus,

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[3] This variable does not address variation in types of tertiary education. In other words, it does not capture whether the tertiary education is geared specifically towards women in terms of preparing them for home life, or whether it is professional school on par with the tertiary education males receive. Limitations in data availability prevented me from breaking this variable down further.
[4] This variable is limited in its ability to provide a detailed account of women's participation in the work force, as it serves only to measure the amount of women participating in the work force. It does not acknowledge the various levels of employment status or variation in professional careers or high and low skill level jobs.

given its significant relation to attitudes toward gender equality in modern states, it is important to control for GDP per capita.

In order to test my hypotheses, I will conduct a mediation model. I begin by testing the direct effect of education and labor on the dependent variable, women's representation in parliament in order to examine my first and second hypotheses. Second, I test for the direct effect of Islamic government on percentage of women in parliament, which allows me to investigate my third hypothesis. Finally, in order to test my fourth hypothesis, which is the mediating role of women's development indicators (education and labor) on the relationship between Islamic government and women in parliament, I run a model that includes all the independent variables. I then run a Sobel mediation test to examine whether women's development indicators are a significant mediator of Islamic governance and women in parliament.

DATA ANALYSIS

To gain a comprehensive understanding of women's development indicators in each case study, I began with comparative examinations of the descriptive statistics of each variable in each country. *Figure 1* shows the data for the dependent variable, percent women in parliament. Turkey has the highest percentage of women in parliament compared to Egypt and Iran, which each had roughly 2% women in parliament in 2009. Egypt had the least amount of women in parliament, although Iran shows a downward trend from 2008-2009. This data preliminarily suggests that the initial aspect of my theory stating that when Islamic influence is present in government there will be less female representatives in parliament. As Iran is measured as the most Islamic state in this

study, according to my theory I would predict that Iran has the lowest percentage of women in parliament. However, this data running contradictory to my theory, shows that the influence of Islam in government potentially does not directly impact women's political leadership as I have theorized previously.
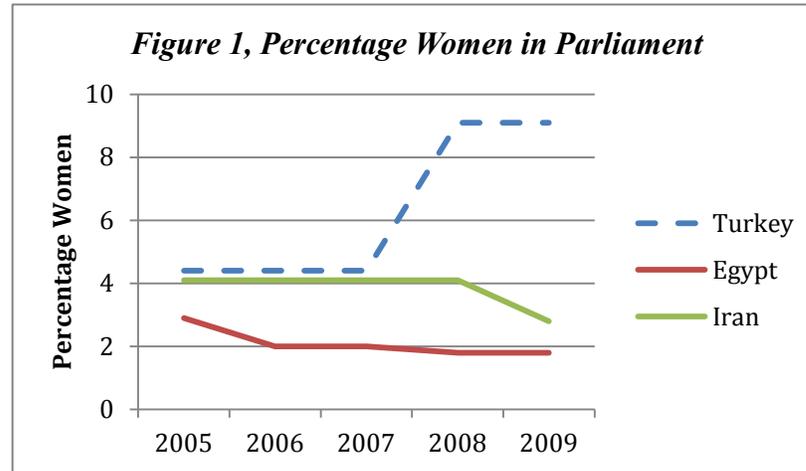

Figure 1, Percentage Women in Parliament

Figure 2 shows the data for the percentage of women in each country with tertiary education. According to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education, tertiary education is defined in two ways. It is defined as theory-based programs designed to provide skills for advanced research programs or professions like medicine, dentistry or architecture, or programs that focus on practical, technical or occupational skills for immediate entry into the work force (UNESCO 2014). The data shows that Turkey just slightly has the highest amount of women attaining tertiary education, while Egypt has the least amount of women with tertiary education. With little variation in the data for educational attainment for women, this preliminary data suggests that the impact of education on women's participation in government in Muslim states may not be significant.

Figure 2, Percent Women Tertiary Education
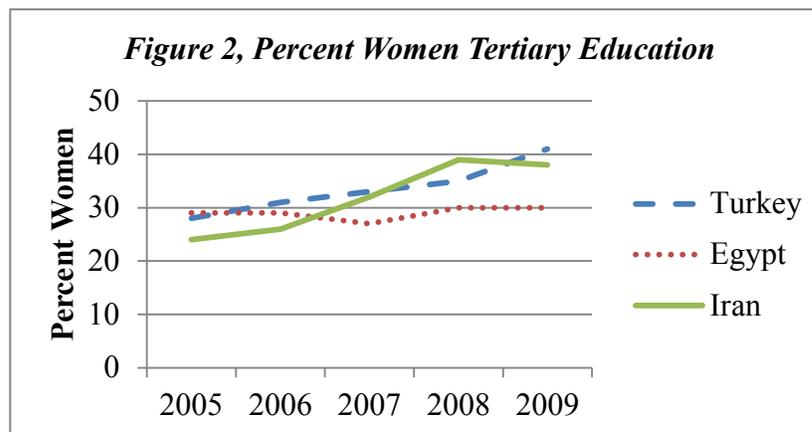
Figure 3 shows the data for percentage of women in the work force in Turkey, Egypt and Iran. Consistent with the data from each other variable, Turkey has the highest percentage of women in the work force, while Egypt has the lowest percentage. The data for women in the labor force in Turkey in 2005 was unavailable.

Figure 3, Percent Women in Labor Force
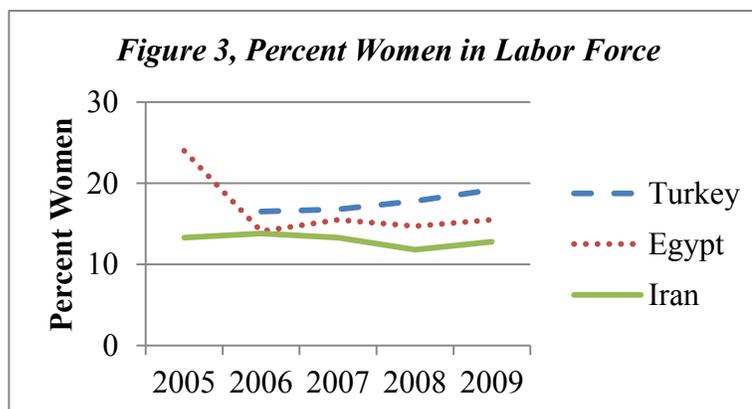
Finally, Figure 4 shows the results for GDP per capita for each country from 2005-2009. Once again, Turkey shows a much higher GDP per capita during this time frame than Egypt and Iran, although it does show a decreasing trend from 2008-2009. Overall, Egypt shows the lowest GDP per capita across this time frame.

Figure 4, GDP Per Capita
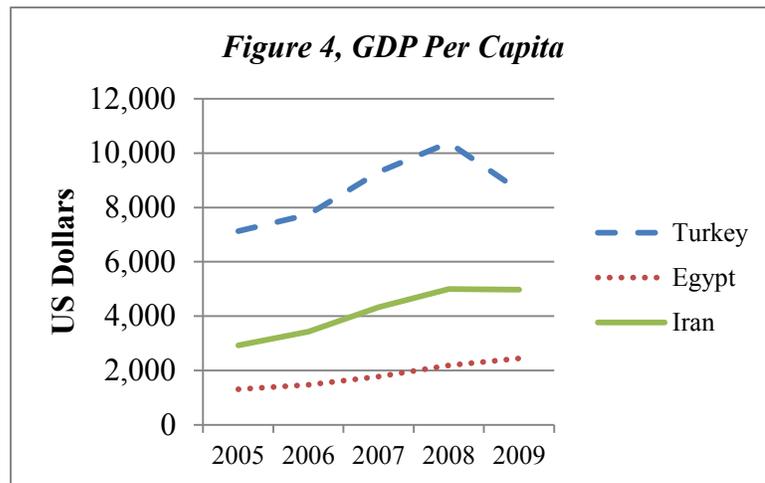
The next step of my analysis is to test the relationships between each independent variable and women in parliament.

Testing Hypothesis 1 through 3

Table 2 displays the results of the tests for my first three hypotheses. The first two columns showing the results of the tests for the impact of women's educational attainment and women's employment on women's representation in parliament show that neither relationship is significant after controlling for GDP per capita. These results do not support my first and second hypotheses.

The next column showing the results of the test for hypothesis three, the impact of Islam on women's representation in government shows similar results, which suggests that GDP per capita is one of the most significant variables affecting gender equality in a Muslim state. The relationship is not significant after controlling for GDP per capita. This outcome is consistent with and supports Steven Fish's analysis that it is not Islam that directly prevents women from participating in government and rejects my third hypothesis (Fish 2002). However, literature suggests that there is, in fact, a division in ideology regarding women's rights in Islamic cultures, although Islam is not a statistically significant deterrent of women in parliament. On one hand, Islamic feminists

in many Muslim countries identify the presence of Islam in government as a potential solution to contemporary women's rights issues, suggesting that fundamental pillars of Islam can and do align with gender equality. On the other hand, Muslim advocates of women's rights argue against Islam in government, emphasizing a more universal standard of human rights absent of religious influence (Barlow & Akbarzadeh 2006). Because the negative relationship between Islam and women's representation in parliament is not statistically significant, I believe this suggests, along with the literature on this subject, that there is an understanding of and an active pursuit of women's rights and social progress in Islamic countries. Understanding that the relationship between Islam and women's political leadership is insignificant, the following results paint a more accurate picture of what prevents and promotes women's political participation in Muslim countries.

Table 2: Testing Hypotheses 1 through 3

	Hypothesis 1: Women's Education Predicting Women in Parliament	Hypothesis 2: Women's Employment Predicting Women in Parliament	Hypothesis 3: Islam Predicting Women in Parliament
% Women Tertiary Education	0.04 (0.09)	-----	-----
% Women in Workforce	-----	0.21 (0.25)	-----
Islam	-----	-----	0.002 (0.005)
GDP Per Capita	5.63e-06*** (1.50e-06)	5.33e-06*** (1.68e-06)	6.42e-06*** (1.62e-06)
Constant	-001 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.004 (0.018)
N	15	14	15
Adjusted R^2	0.60	0.63	0.60

Testing Hypothesis 4

The next model in my analysis tests the relationship between women's

development indicators (including GDP per capita) and women in parliament and the

impact of the mediating variable Islam on this relationship. Table 3 shows the results of

the multivariate regression analyses testing for the mediating effect of women's

development indicators on the relationship between women's development indicators and

women in parliament.

Table 3: Women's Development Indicators Mediating Relationship Between Islam and Women in Parliament

	Islam Predicting Women's Education	Islam Predicting Women's Employment	Fully specified model predicting women in parliament
Islam	0.02	-0.02***	0.02*
	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.01)
% women tertiary education	-----	-----	0.04
			(0.09)
% women work force	-----	-----	0.95**
			(0.0.45)
GDP per capita	0.00**	1.00e-06	5.01e-06**
	(4.78e-06)	(1.01e-06)	(1.96e-06)
Constant	0.22***	0.19***	-0.17*
	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.09)
N	15	14	14
R²	0.25	0.81	0.68

The first two columns show the results of the tests measuring whether or not

Islam predicts education and employment in majority Muslim countries. Islam does not

significantly impact the proportion of women achieving tertiary level education. As the

preliminary data for this variable suggested, I am not surprised by the outcome of this

test. However, the data for tertiary education in this study is somewhat limited in its

conceptualization, as tertiary education in the study is a broad term used to incorporate

women's attainment of college or professional school or trade school. Having access to data that would measure these types of tertiary schooling separately, I believe would offer more variation within this variable and possibly provide a more significant outcome.

What is the most interesting and significant finding thus far is that Islam has a very strong statistically significant negative effect on percentage of women in the work force, even after controlling for GDP per capita. In fact, GDP per capita has no statistically significant effect on women in the workforce in majority Muslim countries when controlling for Islamic governance. Thus, the results suggest that, among the most important indicators of women's development in Islamic countries is not so much their access to education, which does not appear to vary much from country to country, but rather the ability to leverage this education into a career. Islamic governance does not prevent women from getting educated, but it does prevent women from entering the work force outside of the home.

Finally, the last column labeled "Fully specified model predicting women in parliament" shows that, after controlling for women's educational attainment, women in the workforce, and GDP per capita, Islamic governance actually has a positive significant impact on women in parliament. This result appears to be driven by women in the workforce. In countries with Islamic governance, when women are given workforce opportunities, that Islam government can actually lead to more women in parliament. I initially hypothesized that Islamic governance would have no effect after controlling for women's development indicators. As it turns out, it actually has a positive effect, and the only women's development indicator that matters in generating this positive effect is

women's access to the workforce. Thus, it appears that women in the workforce may mediate the relationship between Islamic governance and women in parliament.

To test the confidence level of this mediating variable (women's participation in the work force), I conducted Sobel and Goodman tests. According to both Sobel and Goodman tests, I can be 99% confident that women in the work force is a significant partial mediator of Islam and women in parliament.

Overall, the results show that the direct effect of Islamic governance on women in parliament is not significant. However, Islamic governance does significantly decrease the rates of women in the workforce. If countries with Islamic governance do allow for women in the workforce, then Islamic governance actually leads to more women in parliament. In other words, after controlling for women in the work force, countries with Islamic governance actually increases the number of women in parliament.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that after controlling for GDP per capita, the impact of Islam in governance on women's educational attainment, participation in the work force and political leadership is not significant. However, when testing for the impact of women's development indicators in terms of education and employment on the relationship between Islam in government and women's representation in parliament, this study shows that only women's participation in the work force alongside GDP per capita acts as a mediator in the relationship between Islam and women's participation in government and that the relationship actually becomes positive in this circumstance. In other words, an increased presence of Islam in government serves as a significant

inhibitor of women in the work force, which leads to a decreased presence of women in parliament. However, when women in Islamic states are allowed to participate in the work force at higher levels, there is actually an increased presence of female representatives in parliament.

This study is also consistent with the literature that suggests economic development within a state cannot be underestimated when considering the status of women's development in any country, secular or non-secular (Donno & Russett 2004; Fish 2002). The results of the tests for all four hypotheses indicate that increased GDP per capita in a Muslim country is one of the largest factors impacting gender equality within a state and must be taken into consideration when analyzing women's social and political status.

In the future development of this study, I would like to ask how the negative relationship between Islam and women's participation in government can be reversed. The results of this study indicate that increased women's status in society, particularly participation in the work force, can mediate this relationship but cannot fully overcome it. Muslim countries where Islamic ideology is dominant in state law have longstanding cultural and political traditions that exclude women from fully participating in society. Addressing continuously oppressive traditions in any society is a complex and sensitive issue that requires a highly developed and comprehensive analysis. For this particular study, I would like to break down the variable for education and employment much further. Because tertiary education is defined in two ways, essentially college and professional school or trade school, I would like to find the rate of each of these definitions of tertiary education for women and how it relates to participation in the work

force. For percentage of women in the work force, I would like develop this variable further by measuring women's status in employment, meaning what percentage of women hold a position of authority in their jobs.

Finally, I would like to expand this study to include many more countries over a much larger time frame. Unfortunately, data on these variables is incredibly limited in most developing states. Either the data is simply unavailable or is limited in various ways. Limited data is one of the most significant challenges to conducting this study. However, I have hope that with the spread highly advanced technology data regarding women's development in all parts of the world will become abundant.

This study contributes to the understanding of the story of women's rights in Muslim countries by focusing on religious, social and political factors surrounding women in Turkey, Egypt and Iran. This study clearly indicates that Islam itself is not responsible for the limitations on women's participation in government, although it remains an important factor in the development of women's rights in Muslim countries. It is evident that strict religiosity in government has a negative affect on women's economic development and political participation, although this relationship can be mediated by increased GDP per capita and women's participation in the workforce. It is also very clear through the results of this study that the effect of GDP per capita on women's participation in social and political life is critical.

Issues surrounding women's development and gender equality are complex and ongoing. The results of this study show that Islam itself does not prevent women from participating in government, and the social factors that promote women's empowerment are the same no matter what religious influence is present. Ultimately, I believe this

study provides important insight on the substantial impact of Islam on women's social

and political development in Muslim countries.

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