

Committee: Human Rights Council (HRC)

Issue: The effect of religion on women's welfare and political opinions in LEDCs

Student Officer: Kathleen Morris

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Kathleen Morris, and I am a 10th grader at ACS of Athens. I am delighted to be serving as your Deputy President in the Human Rights Council in this year's ACGMUN Conference! I will be guiding you through the topic of "*The effect of religion on women's welfare and political opinions in LEDCs*" and I am thrilled to listen to your fruitful debates and solutions upon the matter!

This conference will be my 10th MUN experience, and I cannot wait for everything it will teach me. I joined MUN two years ago with not many expectations of where and what it would bring me, but, after my very first conference, I just knew it was going to become a very big part of my life. MUN is something that I consider more than just an extra-curricular activity; MUN brings excitement and a new range of goals into my life, and it is my goal, through this conference, to help you explore everything that it has to offer, not only as a delegate but as a global citizen.

The Human Rights Council is one of my favourite committees. This is because Human Rights are the foundation of protection for us all, especially those who are more vulnerable and may face abuse, neglect, or isolation. It is my responsibility, through this study guide, to provide you with an overview of the topic in order for you all to craft resolutions to your full potential. It is important that you thoroughly read through this guide to help you fully comprehend the issue and think of feasible solutions. I cannot wait to see you all in person to further discuss upon this matter. Should you have any questions about the topic at hand, do not hesitate to contact me, you can do so through my personal email, morrisk25@stu.acs.gr.

Kind regards,
Kathleen Morris

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The effect of religion on women's welfare and political opinions is complex and multifaceted, and can vary depending on a number of factors, such as the specific religious tradition, cultural context, and individual beliefs and practices. On the one hand, religion can provide a sense of community and belonging, as well as moral guidance and a framework for making sense of the world. For some women, this can be a source of comfort and support, particularly in times of crisis or hardship. On the other hand, some religious traditions may perpetuate gender inequalities and restrict women's rights and freedoms. This can include limitations on women's access to education, employment opportunities, and healthcare, as well as restrictions on their mobility and autonomy.

Religion can also play a role in shaping women's political opinions, particularly on issues related to gender and sexuality. Some religious traditions may promote conservative views on issues such as abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and contraception, which can clash with more liberal or progressive perspectives. These differing views on gender and sexuality can have significant political implications, influencing the ways in which women vote, engage in activism and advocacy, and participate in public discourse. It is worth noting, however, that not all women who identify with a particular religion or religious tradition will necessarily share the same political views or perspectives. Religion is just one of many factors that can shape a person's political beliefs and values, and individual experiences and perspectives can vary widely.

Overall, the impact of religion on women's welfare and political opinions is complex and can vary depending on a range of individual and contextual factors. It is important to approach these issues with nuance and sensitivity, taking into account the diversity of experiences and perspectives within different religious communities. More than merely policy, representation in government serves as an instrument for social empowerment in all women. Discrimination against women, especially in regard to religious beliefs is one of the most common human rights breaches in our society and thus finding solutions is of utmost importance.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Gender Discrimination

Gender Discrimination is defined as discrimination against a person or group of people based on their gender. It commonly takes form as the idea that women are inferior to men and should thus be treated as such. Women have traditionally been subject to discrimination, social and economic inequalities, and limited freedoms compared to men. Some of the common freedoms that women are denied in many societies include: political participation, education, employment, safety and security.¹

Political opinions

Political opinion is the general viewpoint on a subject or voting intention that is important to a society. The opinions of the populace on issues that concern them. In many countries, especially those still developing, women's political opinions are severely neglected and often silenced. In many cases, women are not even allowed to interfere with politics and it is considered to be a "man's job".²

Political Participation

"Political participation includes a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on the world and how it is governed, and try to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives."³

Reproductive Rights

"Reproductive rights are the rights of women as individuals to control and make decisions relating to reproduction and childbearing, especially with regard to contraception and abortion."⁴

Women's Rights

These rights are institutionalised or supported by legislation, local tradition, and conduct in some nations, but are disregarded and suppressed in others. They differ from general human rights in that they contend that there is a customary

¹ "Gender Discrimination Causes Inequality between Girls and Boys around the World." *Save the Children*, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/how-gender-discrimination-impacts-boys-and-girls#:~:text=Gender%20discrimination%20means%20any%20exclusion,full%20and%20equal%20human%20rights>.

² *The Open University*, <https://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/political-opinion#:~:text=Opinions%20relating%20to%20the%20conduct,left%20of%20a%20trade%20union>.

³ "Political Participation - Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR ..." *Political Participation*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK310967/>.

⁴ "Oxford Languages and Google - English." *Oxford Languages*, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>.

prejudice against women in relation to men. Although there might be some inequalities in some nations between male and female, this issue focuses on a more serious aspect of it, where women are not even granted basic human rights, such as freedom of expression.⁵

Women's Welfare

Women's welfare is defined as ensuring the health, happiness, and comfort of all women globally. It takes form of gender justice which implies eradicating all types of gender discrimination, allowing women to enjoy fundamental freedoms and rights on an equal footing with men in all sectors, including political, economic, social, civic, and cultural, etc.⁶

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Presence of Women in Politics

The presence of women in politics can be connected to religion in several ways, as religious beliefs and cultural practices can influence the way in which women are able to participate in political life. In some cases, religious beliefs may be used to justify the exclusion of women from political participation or leadership positions. For example, in some conservative or fundamentalist interpretations of certain religions, women are seen as having a subservient role to men and are not considered suitable for leadership roles.

Religion can also impact the ability of women to participate in politics through cultural practices that limit their freedom of movement and expression. For example, in some communities, women may be expected to remain in the home and take care of domestic responsibilities, which can make it difficult for them to engage in political activities outside of the home. Similarly, cultural expectations around dress and behaviour may prevent women from expressing themselves in public spaces, including political rallies or protests. However, it's important to note that not all religious beliefs or cultural practices limit women's participation in politics. In many cases, women have been at the forefront of political movements and have used religious and cultural values to advocate for their rights and representation. For example, in some contexts,

⁵ "Information about Women's Human Rights." *Global Fund for Women*, <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/womens-human-rights/#:~:text=Women's%20rights%20are%20the%20fundamental,a%20fair%20and%20equal%20wages>

⁶ *Woman Welfare | Definition, Examples, Diagrams - TOPPR ASK*. <https://www.toppr.com/ask/content/concept/woman-welfare-205148/>.

women have mobilized around religious or cultural values to demand greater political representation or to challenge discriminatory laws or practices.

In summary, the presence of women in politics can be connected to religion in complex ways, as religious beliefs and cultural practices can both facilitate and hinder women's political participation and representation. It's important to recognize the diversity of religious beliefs and cultural practices and to work towards creating inclusive political spaces where all individuals, regardless of their gender or background, can fully participate and engage in political life.

Political Ambition

Substantial surveys have shown that women who are potential political candidates based on their professional and economic credentials indicate less aspiration to hold leadership positions than equivalent males (Fox and Lawless, 2004). This phenomenon is known as the "ambition gap," and it is thought to be a result of multiple factors, including cultural and societal expectations, bias and discrimination, and lack of female role models in leadership positions.

Women may face greater societal expectations regarding their role as caregivers, which can limit their ability to prioritize political careers. Furthermore, women may be discouraged from pursuing political leadership positions due to the bias and discrimination they face, including gender-based stereotypes and negative attitudes toward female leaders. Additionally, the lack of female role models in leadership positions can make it difficult for women to envision themselves in these roles. When women do not see other women in positions of power, they may feel like they do not belong in those spaces and may be less likely to pursue political careers.

To address the ambition gap, it is crucial to increase the visibility of female political leaders and to provide more support for women who aspire to hold leadership positions. This includes mentoring and training programs that help women build the skills and confidence needed to pursue political careers, as well as policies that address systemic bias and discrimination. By creating a more supportive environment for women in politics, we can help close the ambition gap and increase gender equality in political leadership.

Voters' bias

According to Krook (2018), research in political science on the subject of the significance of voter prejudice in explaining the underrepresentation of women in politics has produced conflicting results. Recent research findings support this conclusion. According to Barbanchon and Sauvagnat (2019), votes for women are

lower in towns with more conventional gender-role attitudes.⁷ The study examined the relationship between gender-role attitudes and political participation by analyzing data from the 2014 French municipal elections. The researchers used a variety of measures to assess gender-role attitudes, including survey data on attitudes toward women's roles in the family and the workplace, as well as data on women's representation in local government.

The findings of the study were clear: in towns with more traditional gender-role attitudes, women were less likely to vote and less likely to run for office. The effect was particularly pronounced among women who had children and were married, suggesting that traditional gender roles and family responsibilities may be a key factor in limiting women's political participation. They interpret this trend as proof of voter bias and come to the conclusion that voter prejudice has a measurable impact on the underrepresentation of women in politics.

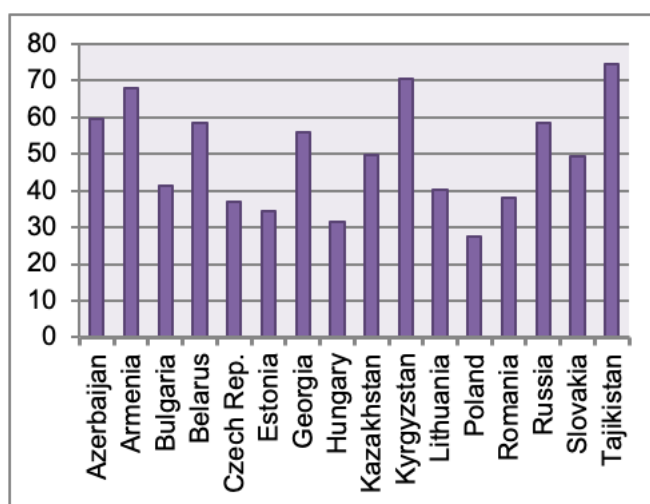


Figure 1: Share of survey respondents who report to “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the statement “Men make better political leaders than women do”.

In the graph above, it is evident that the countries which follow more religious regimes such as Tajikistan are more likely to agree that men make better political leaders than women do. However, in countries such as Poland which have established legal policies trying to separate religion from political views, are less likely to agree with the above statement. Because of this, the conclusion that religion plays a role in voters bias can be drawn.

Patriarchal system

⁷ Pamela Campa Senior Researcher | ISET-PI , et al. “Women in Politics: Why Are They under-Represented? • Free Network.” *FREE NETWORK*, 14 Apr. 2021, <https://freepolicybriefs.org/2021/03/08/women-in-politics/>.

Numerous religious leaders have embraced beliefs and dogma (such as traditional female roles, patriarchal beliefs, religious teaching and stereotypes) that declared women to be minors in the fields of religion, politics and government, economic ownership, and sociocultural concerns. Political parties have a long history of being patriarchal, exclusive groups. Women encounter both official and unofficial disadvantages to political involvement, such as secretive nomination procedures and culturally hypermasculine political parties. For example, in Pakistan, women face numerous challenges in politics due to a combination of legal barriers, cultural norms, and patriarchal attitudes. For example, the country's electoral system often relies on secretive nomination procedures that make it difficult for women to get selected as candidates by their political parties.

In addition, many of Pakistan's political parties have a hypermasculine culture that can be unwelcoming to women. This includes the use of violence and intimidation against female candidates, as well as a lack of support and resources for women who want to run for office. Women who do manage to get selected as candidates often face intense scrutiny and criticism from male party members and the media, and are often subject to sexist and misogynistic attacks.⁸ However, some parties have formally pledged their support for gender equality, but most don't follow through on their promises or achieve a high level of involvement. For example, the Democratic Party has long promoted itself as a champion of women's rights and gender equality, and has made various promises and commitments to promote women's participation in politics. For example, the party has pledged to support policies that promote equal pay for women, expand access to reproductive healthcare, and increase women's representation in elected office. However, while the Democratic Party has made progress in promoting women's rights and representation, it is still far from achieving full gender equality. Women continue to be underrepresented in many areas of the party, including leadership positions and high-profile political appointments. Women also face significant barriers to political involvement, such as systemic sexism and discrimination, limited access to resources and funding, and cultural and social norms that prioritize men's voices and perspectives.⁹

Moreover, specifically, in LEDC's where, being married is a sign of respectability, many women find it difficult to become financially independent. As a result, many women in these countries are unable to pursue their own goals or careers, as they are expected to prioritize the needs of their families and communities. This can lead to a cycle of poverty and dependence, as women are often unable to

⁸ NDI, "Win With Women."

⁹ Teresa Sacchet, "Political Parties: When Do They Work for Women?" iKNOW Politics, December 2005,

https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/political_parties_when_do_they_work_for_women.pdf.

access education or employment opportunities that would allow them to become financially independent and support themselves and their families. Sociocultural and political constraints ingrained in patriarchy, place women in a slave-like situation where they are forced to rely on others for their basic needs and are unable to make decisions for themselves or achieve their full potential.

Legal Frameworks

The issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions can be compounded by problematic legal frameworks that may restrict or undermine women's rights. One such framework is religious and cultural laws, which may be given priority over national laws and can be used to discriminate against women. For example, religious laws may be used to restrict women's freedom of movement, dress codes, or access to education and employment. Similarly, family laws in some countries may also discriminate against women, giving men greater control over issues such as marriage, divorce, and custody of children, and limiting women's ability to make decisions about their own lives. Another problematic legal framework is blasphemy laws, which prohibit the expression of opinions or beliefs that are considered to be disrespectful of religion or religious figures. These laws can have negative consequences for women, as they may be used to silence women's voices or justify violence against them, especially in cases where women challenge traditional religious or cultural practices. In some countries, there may also be a lack of legal protections for women, particularly with respect to gender-based violence. Women may face difficulty in accessing justice, or they may be subjected to further discrimination or violence when seeking legal recourse.

These legal frameworks present significant barriers to women's welfare and political opinions, especially in countries where conservative, patriarchal religious beliefs are present. Addressing these frameworks may require a comprehensive approach, including legal reform, education, and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights, regardless of their religious affiliations or beliefs. Such efforts may involve challenging traditional religious and cultural norms that discriminate against women and seeking to promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of religious and cultural practices that respects women's rights and promotes their political participation and well-being.

Costs to society

The costs of society when religion affects women's welfare and political opinions can be significant. When women are marginalized and denied access to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation, it not only limits their individual opportunities but also holds back the development of society as a whole. One cost of religion affecting women's welfare is the loss of human potential. Women

represent half of the population, and their full participation in society is essential for economic and social development. By limiting women's opportunities, societies are not utilizing the full potential of their human resources, which can hinder their overall progress. Another cost is the perpetuation of inequality and discrimination. When religious beliefs are used to justify discrimination and marginalization, it perpetuates a cycle of inequality and reinforces harmful gender norms. This can contribute to the persistence of poverty and social exclusion, leading to greater levels of conflict and instability.

In addition to these costs, the impact of religion on women's welfare can also have implications for health and well-being. For example, women who are denied access to education and healthcare may be more vulnerable to health problems and lack the skills to care for their families. This can have ripple effects on the health and well-being of society as a whole. Therefore, it is important to address the impact of religion on women's welfare and political opinions to ensure that women have equal opportunities and rights, regardless of their religious beliefs. This can help promote social and economic development, reduce inequality, and improve the overall well-being of society.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Finland

Finland is known for its strong commitment to gender equality and human rights, and this extends to its approach to the issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions in less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Finland recognizes that women's rights are human rights, and that the denial of these rights based on religious or cultural practices is a form of discrimination. As a result, Finland has been active in promoting women's rights and gender equality through various channels, including development cooperation programs, international advocacy, and diplomatic efforts. Finland has supported initiatives to increase women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, and has worked to strengthen legal frameworks that protect women's rights and promote gender equality.

In addition, Finland has supported efforts to challenge harmful cultural and religious practices that discriminate against women, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Finland has advocated for the empowerment of women in all areas of society, including in politics and decision-making roles. This has been reflected in its foreign policy, which seeks to promote gender equality and human rights as universal values that transcend cultural and religious boundaries. Overall, Finland's

stance on the issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions in LEDCs is one of advocacy and support for women's rights and gender equality. Finland recognizes the importance of addressing the ways in which cultural and religious practices can negatively impact women's welfare and political opinions, and is committed to promoting the rights of all women, regardless of their religious or cultural background.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, religion has a significant impact on women's welfare and political opinions. Conservative gender norms and patriarchal attitudes rooted in religious beliefs often limit women's access to education, healthcare, and employment, while also restricting their freedom of movement and expression. Additionally, gender-based violence, including domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault, disproportionately affects women and is often justified by traditional beliefs about gender roles and female subservience to men. While some religious groups may mobilize women to participate in political activities, religion can also serve as a barrier to women's political participation, especially where it is used to justify gender discrimination or restrict women's access to public spaces. Women who challenge traditional religious norms may face social stigma and violence, making it difficult for them to participate in public life or advocate for their rights.

To address the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions in Nigeria, it is crucial to challenge patriarchal gender norms and promote a more inclusive understanding of religious beliefs that respects women's rights and promotes their political participation and well-being. This will require a comprehensive approach, including legal reform, education, and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights, regardless of their religious affiliations or beliefs. By challenging traditional religious and cultural norms that discriminate against women and promoting a more equitable understanding of religious practices, Nigeria can help ensure that all women have equal opportunities and rights, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Palestine

In Palestine, the role of religion in women's welfare and political opinions is complex due to the influence of conservative interpretations of Islamic law and patriarchal gender norms. While some interpretations of Islam promote social justice and equality for women, others may limit their access to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation. For example, some religious groups may discourage women from participating in politics or limit their ability to work outside the home. Additionally, gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, is a

significant problem in Palestine, and some traditional beliefs about gender roles may justify this violence.

To promote women's rights in Palestine, a multifaceted approach is needed that includes legal and policy reforms, education, and advocacy efforts. Legal and policy reforms can help protect women's rights and promote gender equality. Education can play a crucial role in promoting a more inclusive understanding of religious beliefs that respects women's rights and promotes their political participation and well-being. Advocacy efforts can help raise awareness of the challenges facing women in Palestine and mobilize support for women's rights. By challenging traditional religious and cultural norms that discriminate against women and promoting a more equitable understanding of religious practices, Palestine can ensure that all women have equal opportunities and rights, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global human rights organization that works to promote and protect human rights around the world. In regard to the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions, Amnesty International has played a significant role in raising awareness about the ways in which religious and cultural practices can lead to discrimination and violence against women. For example, Amnesty International has documented cases of women and girls who have been subjected to forced marriages, honour killings, female genital mutilation, and other forms of gender-based violence, often in the name of religious or cultural traditions. The organization has also highlighted the ways in which conservative, patriarchal interpretations of religion can be used to restrict women's access to education, healthcare, and political participation.

In response to these issues, Amnesty International has conducted campaigns and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting women's rights and challenging discriminatory practices based on religious or cultural beliefs. The organization has called on governments and religious leaders to take action to end violence against women, protect women's rights, and promote gender equality. Amnesty International has also supported women's rights activists and organizations around the world, providing resources and advocacy to help amplify their voices and advance their agendas. Through its work, Amnesty International has helped to raise awareness about the impact of religion on women's welfare and political opinions, and has advocated for measures to protect women's rights and promote gender equality regardless of their religious affiliations or beliefs.

OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is a regional intergovernmental organization that is committed to promoting peace, security, and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. In the context of women's rights and gender equality, the OSCE has undertaken a range of activities that seek to address the issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions. One way in which the OSCE has helped to address this issue is through its work on promoting the participation of women in politics and decision-making. The OSCE recognizes that women's participation in politics is essential for the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women's rights, and it has worked to support initiatives that increase women's access to political participation and leadership positions.

Another way in which the OSCE has addressed the issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare is through its work on preventing and combating violence against women. The OSCE has recognized that violence against women is a serious human rights violation and a barrier to women's empowerment and participation in society. The OSCE has supported initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. Overall, the OSCE has taken a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of the effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions, by promoting women's political participation, combating violence against women, and promoting women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
19 July 1848	Seneca Falls Convention: The first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. One of the major issues discussed was women's suffrage, or the right to vote, which was denied to women at the time due to religious and cultural beliefs.
19 February, 1963	Feminine Mystique: Betty Friedan's book, <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> , sparked the second wave of feminism and highlighted the ways in which women's traditional roles in society were limiting their potential and happiness.

<p>22 January, 1973</p>	<p>Roe v. Wade: The landmark Supreme Court case legalized abortion in the United States, but the issue remains controversial, with religious groups often opposing the practice.</p>
<p>15 September, 1995</p>	<p>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 countries agreed on a comprehensive plan to promote gender equality and women's rights. However, some religious groups opposed the document's emphasis on reproductive health and rights.</p>
<p>31 October 2000</p>	<p>Security Council Resolution 1325 which recognizes the need for women's rights and experiences to be integrated into conflict prevention and resolution strategies, and calls for the protection of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations.</p>
<p>2012</p>	<p>Malala Yousafzai: Malala, a young Pakistani girl, was shot by the Taliban for advocating for girls' education. The incident drew global attention to the challenges faced by girls and women in countries where religious extremism is prevalent.</p>
<p>26 October, 2020</p>	<p>Amy Coney Barrett: Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation to the Supreme Court raised concerns among women's rights advocates due to her conservative religious beliefs and potential impact on issues like abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.</p>

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Security Council Resolution 1325

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, calls for the protection of women's rights and the prevention of gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Regarding the issue of women's welfare and political opinions in regard to religion, Resolution 1325 recognizes the role of women in promoting peace and security, including through their participation in decision-making processes. The resolution acknowledges that religious and cultural values can play a positive role in supporting women's participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. At the same time, Resolution 1325 also recognizes that women can face unique challenges in conflict and post-conflict situations, particularly in areas where conservative, patriarchal religious beliefs are present. The resolution calls for measures to ensure that women are protected from violence, including sexual violence and trafficking, and for the promotion of women's rights and participation in all aspects of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

Overall, Resolution 1325 is an important tool in addressing the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and promoting their participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. While the resolution does not specifically focus on religion, it recognizes the importance of cultural and religious values in promoting women's participation in these efforts, while also emphasizing the need to protect women's rights and ensure their welfare.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. CEDAW aims to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life, including politics. In countries where conservative, patriarchal religious beliefs are present, women may face significant barriers to their political participation, including social, cultural, and legal obstacles. CEDAW provides a legal framework for addressing these barriers by requiring state parties to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure their full and equal participation in political life.

For example, CEDAW requires state parties to ensure that women have equal access to political representation and decision-making positions. This can include measures such as affirmative action programs, quotas for women in political positions, and efforts to address cultural and societal attitudes that might discourage women's political participation. Additionally, CEDAW requires state parties to ensure that

women have access to education, training, and resources to support their political engagement.

Moreover, CEDAW emphasizes the importance of eliminating discrimination against women in all areas of life, including in the family and in religious and cultural contexts. This can help to challenge conservative, patriarchal religious beliefs that might limit women's political participation and undermine their rights.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5

UN SDG 5, also known as the fifth Sustainable Development Goal, is focused on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The goal has several targets, including eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women, ensuring women's full and effective participation in political, economic, and public life, and guaranteeing women's access to reproductive and sexual health and rights.

Religion can have a significant impact on women's welfare and political opinions, both positively and negatively. On the positive side, some religious teachings promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and some religious institutions work actively to support women's rights and improve their welfare. However, on the negative side, some religious traditions can be used to justify discrimination against women and limit their opportunities and freedoms. For example, some religious leaders might argue that women should not be allowed to hold political office or participate in public life, or that they should not have access to certain forms of healthcare.

In this context, SDG 5 can be seen as a framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment regardless of their religious beliefs or practices. By focusing on eliminating discrimination and violence against women and promoting their participation in political, economic, and public life, the SDG can help to ensure that women are able to exercise their rights and fulfil their potential, regardless of their religious affiliations or beliefs.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Women's Rights Movements

Women's rights movements have been instrumental in advancing gender equality and challenging discriminatory laws and policies in many countries around the world. These movements have fought for women's rights to education, healthcare, political representation, and economic opportunities, as well as for an end to discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, or other beliefs.

One area where women's rights movements have made significant progress is in challenging laws and policies that discriminate against women on the basis of religious beliefs. For example, in some countries, women have challenged laws that require them to wear religious clothing, such as the hijab, niqab, or burqa, arguing that such laws violate their freedom of expression and their right to religious and cultural diversity.

In other countries, women have fought against laws that restrict their mobility or limit their access to public spaces on the basis of religious beliefs. For example, women in Saudi Arabia successfully campaigned for the right to drive in 2018, after decades of restrictions that were based on conservative interpretations of Islamic law.

Overall, women's rights movements have played a key role in raising awareness about the discriminatory impact of religious beliefs on women's rights and promoting policies and practices that promote gender equality and respect for diversity.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL)

"The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest European umbrella networks of women's associations representing more than 2.000 organisations in all European Union Member States, as well as its candidate countries. The EWL was founded with a vision of a society in which contribution of women to all aspects of life is recognized and celebrated. This means that women should be recognized as leaders with self-confidence, freedom of choice and freedom from exploitation and violence."¹⁰

The EWL brings together women's movements across Europe with the aim of promoting women's human rights and gender equality. As a result, it shares its knowledge, skills, and expertise on gender equality and speaks for women in EU political spheres.

The EWL promotes women's rights and gender equality through advocacy and lobbying. It engages in research, policy analysis, and advocacy work to promote policies and legislation that advance women's welfare and political opinions. The EWL works with EU institutions, governments, and civil society organizations to promote women's participation and leadership in decision-making, address gender-based violence and discrimination, and improve women's economic, social, and political rights. Through its networking and partnership-building activities, the EWL seeks to amplify the voices of women's organisations and promote their inclusion in policy-making processes at all levels.

¹⁰ "European Women's Lobby." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Dec. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Women%27s_Lobby.

International Alliance of Women (IAW)

International Alliance of Women (IAW) is a non-governmental organisation that works to advance the rights of women and girls across the world. It has 41 members. Since the financial crisis and economic recession both pose risks to gender equality and poverty (women may face discrimination in hiring and promotions, and may be paid less than men for the same work. This can limit their ability to build economic security and improve their social and economic status.), the IAW is now working aggressively in this area. In order to prevent the adverse impacts (examples include gender-based violence, lack of access to healthcare, lack of political participation, perpetuated discrimination and bias against women) that policies have on women, the IAW promotes the equal involvement of women at all levels and the implementation of all policies in the corporate and private sectors. It does so by engaging in advocacy and awareness-raising, providing capacity building and training, collaborating with stakeholders, and conducting research and monitoring to support women's empowerment. The IAW works to promote policies and practices that support women's involvement and leadership in these sectors, and provide training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to help women build their skills and become effective leaders. Additionally, it promotes the adoption of macroeconomic measures that uphold human rights and gender equality. To empower its members to take action on gender issues, the IAW uses feminist economics capacity development, which refers to the empowerment of women as individuals and collectives to gather, evaluate, and use information to better and increase control over their lives at the micro- and macro-levels. This strategy aims at the positive economic, social, and political change of women.

The IAW has worked to increase the number of women in political leadership roles, to promote women's representation and participation in decision-making, and to address gender-based discrimination and violence. The IAW also conducts research and monitoring to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Through partnerships and collaboration with a range of organisations and stakeholders, the IAW shares knowledge, resources, and best practices to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Assessing the gender inclusivity of political parties

Conducting gender and inclusion assessments of political parties in LEDC's which follow a religious regime can be an important step in addressing the negative effects of religion on women's welfare and political opinions. Such assessments can help to identify areas where political parties may be perpetuating gender inequalities and discrimination, and to develop strategies for promoting more inclusive and equitable policies and practices.

A gender and inclusion assessment of political parties will be done by expert personnel sent by the UN to record the ratio of women to men in political power every four years and reporting it back to the UN in order for a trend line to be figured in order to understand the relationship between women in political power and LEDC's which follow a religious regime. They could involve a review of party platforms, policies, and practices to identify areas where gender biases may be present. This could include an analysis of party stances on issues such as women's rights, gender-based violence, and reproductive health, as well as an evaluation of party structures and practices that may limit women's participation and representation. By identifying areas where political parties may be perpetuating gender inequalities, such assessments can help to inform efforts to promote more inclusive and equitable policies and practices. Once areas of concern have been identified, strategies for promoting more gender-inclusive and equitable policies and practices can be developed. This might include efforts to increase the representation of women in party leadership and decision-making roles, to promote policies that address gender-based violence and discrimination, and to support women's participation in the political process.

Reforming religious institutions and practices

Reforming religious institutions and practices can be an important way to address the negative effects of religion on women's welfare. Some religious institutions and practices may perpetuate gender inequalities and discrimination, including restrictions on women's participation in religious leadership and practices that limit women's autonomy and agency. Efforts to reform these institutions and practices can promote more inclusive and progressive values, and challenge harmful practices and beliefs that can limit women's opportunities and well-being.

One approach to reforming religious institutions and practices is through feminist theology and activism. Feminist theologians and activists work to challenge traditional interpretations of religious texts and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities, and to promote more inclusive and empowering views of women's

spirituality and agency. By working within religious communities to promote feminist values and to challenge patriarchal structures and beliefs, these efforts can help to create more inclusive and supportive religious environments for women.

Another approach to reforming religious institutions and practices is through interfaith dialogue and collaboration. By bringing together religious leaders and communities from different traditions, these efforts can help to promote mutual understanding and respect, and to challenge harmful practices and beliefs that may be perpetuated by some religious communities. By fostering more inclusive and collaborative religious environments, such efforts can help to mitigate the negative effects of religion on women's welfare, and to promote more equitable and supportive religious communities for all.

Interfaith dialogue and collaboration

Interfaith dialogue and collaboration refer to the process of engaging with individuals and communities from different religious traditions to promote understanding, respect, and cooperation. This approach can be especially powerful in promoting women's welfare and political participation, as it allows women from different faiths to come together to address common challenges and to build solidarity. Through interfaith dialogue and collaboration, women can share their experiences and perspectives, and work together to address common issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and access to healthcare and education. By fostering understanding and cooperation among women from different faiths, interfaith dialogue and collaboration can help to break down stereotypes and promote a sense of shared purpose and solidarity.

Interfaith dialogue and collaboration can take many forms, including community-based programs, advocacy campaigns, and educational initiatives. These efforts can be supported by religious leaders and institutions, as well as by governments, non-governmental organizations, and civil society groups. One example of an interfaith initiative to promote women's welfare and political participation is the Women of Faith Network, which brings together women from different faiths to work on common issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment. This network provides a platform for women to share their experiences, discuss common challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that support women's rights and well-being.

Involvement of the UNHRC in promoting governmental actions

The Human Rights Council, as a United Nations body that is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world, can promote governments on an international level to aid the differentiation of gender role attitudes and religion is by using its platform to advocate for the adoption of policies and practices that advance gender equality and religious freedom. The HRC can initially encourage governments to adopt laws and policies that advance gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women and girls. This can include policies related to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. The HRC can also advocate for the protection of religious freedom, which is a fundamental human right. This can include advocating for the repeal of laws that restrict religious practices or discriminate against individuals based on their religious beliefs. Furthermore, the HRC can support efforts to raise awareness about gender role attitudes and religion and their impact on human rights. This can include supporting research and studies that examine the relationship between gender and religion, as well as promoting educational programs that aim to challenge gender stereotypes and promote religious tolerance. Lastly, the HRC can promote dialogue and cooperation between governments and civil society organizations to address issues related to gender and religion. This can include hosting meetings and international conferences where governments and civil society organizations can exchange ideas and best practices on how to promote gender equality and religious freedom.

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