

Globalization of Human Rights and Reform of the System for the Protection of Women's Rights in the Arab States of the Persian Gulf: A Comparative Study of Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first paragraph of the “Review of the Research Background,” the authors state that previous studies can be categorized into “violence against women; financial and family rights; the right to divorce; political rights; labor rights and economic security; social participation; the status of women in religious systems; the relationship between Sharia and human rights; the role of judicial and executive institutions; and the gap between formal rights and realized rights.” This classification is useful, but the manuscript does not explain how these categories were derived. The authors should specify whether the themes emerged inductively from content analysis, were predefined deductively from human-rights doctrine, or were constructed through a hybrid procedure. The review would be methodologically stronger if it provided explicit inclusion criteria, databases or source repositories, language restrictions, publication period, search terms, document types, screening procedures, and thematic coding strategy.

In the paragraph beginning “In Iranian studies, Malekshah (2025), in ‘Human Rights Violations in Domestic Violence against Women’...,” the literature is summarized largely study by study. This produces an annotated-bibliography effect rather than a critical literature review. The authors should move beyond reporting what individual studies concluded and explicitly compare their conceptual assumptions, methodologies, jurisdictional scope, evidentiary bases, and limitations. For example, the discussion of domestic violence should distinguish doctrinal legal research from empirical research on implementation and

should identify whether the cited studies assess legislation, judicial practice, service provision, prevalence, or institutional capacity. This would make the literature review analytical rather than merely descriptive.

In the paragraph beginning “In the field of family and financial rights,” the sentence “family-law reform and the adoption of contemporary Islamic interpretations can be compatible with gender justice” requires more conceptual precision. The manuscript repeatedly uses the expressions “gender justice,” “equality,” “human dignity,” and “non-discrimination,” but does not define how these concepts differ analytically. In a comparative legal article concerning Islamic family law, the distinction between formal equality, substantive equality, equity, differentiated treatment, and justice-based jurisprudential reasoning is crucial. The authors should establish clear operational definitions early in the manuscript and apply them consistently when comparing laws and reform trajectories.

In the paragraph beginning “Regarding the relationship between Islamic rights and international standards,” the sentence “a substantial part of the existing disagreements arises from divergent understandings of concepts such as equality, justice, and the family” is theoretically important but underdeveloped. The article should establish a more explicit analytical framework for examining the relationship between international human-rights standards and Islamic legal reasoning. At present, “Sharia” is sometimes treated as a legal source, sometimes as a cultural variable, and sometimes as a set of interpretive traditions. These are analytically distinct. The revised manuscript should distinguish constitutional references to Sharia, codified personal-status rules, jurisprudential doctrines, judicial interpretation, and broader socio-cultural claims attributed to religion.

In the paragraph beginning “Regarding international obligations, Ali (2019) and Talbi (2019) emphasized...,” the treatment of CEDAW reservations should be made country-specific and temporally sensitive. The current discussion tends to generalize “Arab states’ reservations” without distinguishing the legal positions of Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. A rigorous comparative article should include a table for each country indicating accession date, major reservations or declarations, subsequent modifications or withdrawals, relevant domestic implementing legislation, and the principal unresolved areas of incompatibility. Such a table would provide a much stronger evidentiary basis for the manuscript’s central argument concerning symbolic versus substantive compliance.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph stating that “Overall, Iranian studies demonstrate that women’s rights cannot be reduced to the text of legislation,” the authors correctly identify implementation as a central issue, but they do not specify how “realized rights” will be evaluated in the comparative part of the study. This is a major methodological gap. The authors should define observable indicators for distinguishing formal rights, claimable rights, and realized rights. Such indicators might include statutory guarantees, availability of judicial remedies, standing and procedural access, institutional enforcement, documented judicial application, administrative practice, labor-force participation, political representation, nationality rights, freedom of movement, access to services, or measurable protection from violence. Without such indicators, the distinction remains conceptually appealing but difficult to apply systematically.

In the paragraph beginning “The same general trend can be observed in international studies,” the discussion of Qatar through Ben Brik (2025) states that reform “need not necessarily proceed through direct confrontation with traditional structures but may instead be pursued through gradual and development-oriented policies.” This conclusion should be treated more critically. Gradual reform associated with national development strategies may improve education and labor-force participation while leaving discriminatory family-law or guardianship structures intact. The manuscript should therefore distinguish between socioeconomic empowerment, legal equality, political inclusion, and reform of personal-status law. Otherwise, developmental modernization may inadvertently be treated as equivalent to rights-based reform.

In the paragraph on Mehdiyeva (2025) and Kodoth (2025), the manuscript appropriately introduces migrant women and the kafala system, but this analytical dimension is not consistently integrated into the six-country comparison. The sentence “legal pluralism can generate compounded inequalities and vulnerabilities for migrant women” should lead to a more systematic

treatment of citizenship status, nationality, migration status, and labor sponsorship as intersecting variables. Given the demographic importance of migrant populations in several Persian Gulf states, the authors should clarify whether the study concerns female citizens, migrant women, or both. If both are included, the legal rights of citizens and non-citizens should not be aggregated because they are governed by significantly different legal regimes.

In the paragraph discussing Waheedi (2022), the sentence “the mere existence of legislation does not guarantee the protection of women; rather, the capacity and independence of the judiciary and women’s actual access to justice are of fundamental importance” identifies a core analytical dimension that deserves a separate comparative treatment. The manuscript should operationalize “judicial independence” and “access to justice” rather than invoking them generically. Relevant variables could include judicial review, family-court specialization, availability of legal aid, evidentiary burdens, procedural standing, enforceability of judgments, accessibility of complaint mechanisms, institutional autonomy, and the existence of specialized bodies dealing with domestic violence or discrimination.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.