Women's Leadership, Political Authority and Autonomy:
Challenging Gender Norms

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Advancing Women's Political Participation in MENA

- The gender disparities in MENA inflict high regional costs and hamper the capacity of a nation to achieve sustainable economic development and good governance.
- Despite government-sponsored efforts to incorporate gender equality in constitutions of Middle Eastern countries to promote female access to economic resources and opportunities, support female inclusion in top management roles, and enable women's political independence, differences in women's political rights still remain (Abdalla).

➢ **Limitations:** **there are internalized cultural influences, traditional and social values regarding different behaviors and responsibilities appropriate for men and women.**

Research Questions

Main research question: What are the *individual-level* factors that contribute to women's political participation in the context of changing gender norms in Qatar?

- Analysing attitudes towards traditional gender norms and women's participation in political decision-making.
- The study aims to understand whether the effects of gender equality initiatives are reflected in national attitudes toward women's political authority and participation in leadership positions in Qatar's workforce.

Literature Review

Literature Review: Gender Norms and Authority

- **Buttorff et al. (2018)** argues that women's educational achievements and increased participation in the workforce have yet to be converted into greater engagement in the political sphere, decision-making roles, and civil society.

- **Abdalla (2015)** indicates that socio-cultural factors affect Arabian Gulf women's role in a leadership and decision making positions:

"There has been no proportionate increase in women in leadership and political participation", which continues to be among the lowest in the world(Abdalla, Berrebi et al., Gaddis et al.)

Existing Situation: why the case of Qatar?

- **Qatar provides a good location for studying the socio-cultural influences to political participation. It is a significant Gulf nation owing to its strategic location and political positioning.**
  - The diplomatic policy of Qatar today is conducive to women's advancement. Growing presence of Qatari women in the workforce and gradual gains in rights for women and participation in politics.

- **Top-down reform rather than bottom-up political action.**
- The association between reduction in gender inequality is becoming increasingly evident, due to state-sponsored programmes.

- **Socio-economic changes in a conservative society.**

Conceptual Framework: Traditional Gender-based Roles

- There is an imbalance in the distribution of power among social groups (Ganguli, Haller and Hoellinger). Qatari society's social structure is patriarchal, i.e., a hierarchy of authority governed and regulated by principles of male autonomy, which explains the absence of women in senior management roles and access to political positions (Al Muftah).
- Women are encouraged to perform core domestic responsibilities and priorities to fulfill family obligations and their social role as mothers, since marriage and motherhood are established cultural values (Al Muftah, Korotayev et al., Mammen and Paxson, Metcalfe, Moghadam).
- **Gender disparities in political power and leadership positions:** too rigid to incorporate changes favouring autonomy and leadership for women since men are given more priority, thereby limiting their advancement in the public sphere

Data and Methods

Data and Methods

The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University conducted nationally-representative **household face-to-face survey.**

- **Data collection period:** 2019
- **Study population:** random sample of Qatari citizens
- **Survey administration:** The survey was programmed using BLAISE software
- **Data analysis:** Cleaned weighted dataset, Analysis script for Stata software which was used for statistical analysis (e.g., factor analysis and multiple regression)

Data and Methods

Dependent variables

- Primary outcomes: opinions about “women’s authority and involvement in leadership roles” Primary outcomes: opinions about “gender roles and decision making”

Independent variables

Potential variables: individual-level factors (age, gender, marital status, educational status, employment status, monthly income).

Data Analysis

For primary outcomes: univariable linear regression analysis was done as the initial step.

Multivariable regression analysis: variables were put in the univariate model and their corresponding p-value was recorded. All those variables for which the P-value was less than 0.20 were considered for the multivariable regression analysis. Using stepwise backward method, multivariable regression was done wherein all variables selected for inclusion in the univariable model were put together and the regression model was run.

Factor analysis was performed with orthogonal varimax rotation and factors were selected based in Eigenvalue of more than 1.0 (Kanyongo, Gibbs Y., 2005). A **combined score** was calculated by adding the responses provided on the questionnaire related to opinions on the two primary outcomes. The higher combined scores reflected positive attitude towards women whereas lower scores reflected negative attitude for women with respect to the two primary outcomes.

Baseline Characteristics

Variables	N(%)
Age (Mean, SD) (in years)	41.5 (13.7)
Age category (in years)	
>50	193 (25.4)
>40-50	175 (23.0)
>30-40	204 (26.8)
18-30	189 (24.8)
Gender	
Male	406 (50.6)
Female	397 (49.4)
Marital status	
Never married	184 (22.9)
Currently married	550 (68.5)
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	69 (8.6)
Educational status	
Never attended any school	42 (5.3)
Primary school	155 (19.4)
secondary school	212 (26.6)
Higher education (Diploma/University degree)	388 (46.7)
Employment status	
Employed	443 (55.3)
Not employed	358 (44.7)

Age: the mean age of the respondents was 41.5 (13.7) years.

Gender: the sex distribution was more or less similar: males (50.6%) and females (49.4%).

Marital, Education & Employment
Majority of the respondents were currently married (68.5%). Almost half had higher education (46.7%). More than half were employed (55.3%)

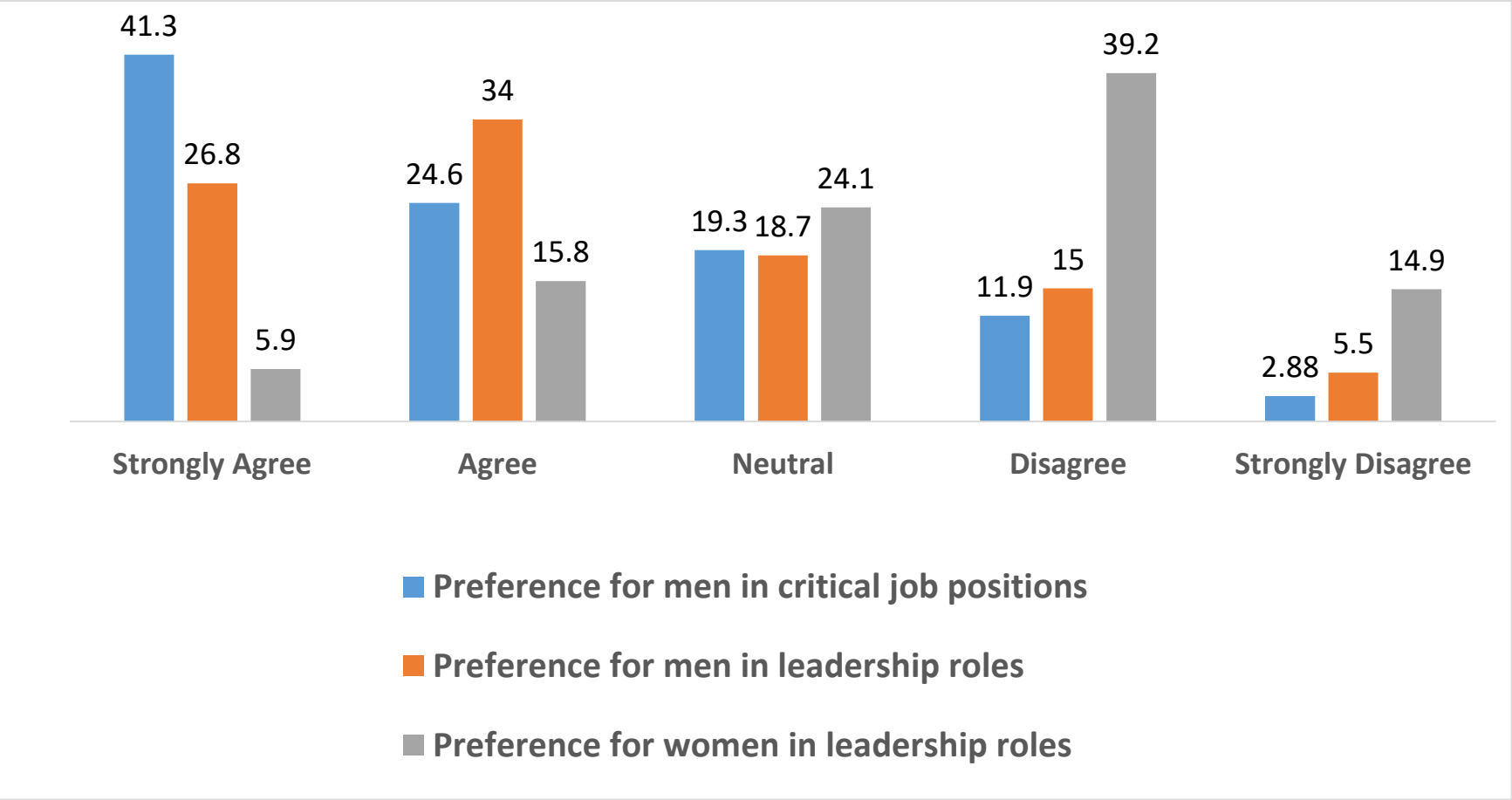
Findings

Political Authority and Leadership

Factor Analysis
Political Authority and Leadership of Women

Questionnaire items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Proportion
I would feel more comfortable if the pilot of an airplane I was traveling on were male. (N=802)	0.7847	0.1057	-0.0168	20.1%
If I were having a serious operation, I would have more confidence in a male surgeon. (N=802)	0.7551	0.2384	0.0222	
If I were in serious legal trouble, I would prefer a male to a female lawyer. (N=788)	0.7015	0.1963	-0.0793	
In general, I would rather take orders/instructions from a man than from a woman. (N=800)	0.1716	0.8210	-0.0357	19.6%
I would rather take advice from a man than from a woman in the most important issues in my life. (N=801)	0.0753	0.7674	0.0101	
In general, I feel more comfortable when a man (vs. a woman) is in charge. (N=802)	0.4040	0.6237	-0.0690	
In general, I would rather my boss at work be a man, not a woman. (N=787)	0.3831	0.4872	-0.1294	
I do not prefer a woman to be in a political leadership position as a prime minister or head of state, (N=796)	0.3380	0.3449	0.0429	
In general, women make better leaders than men do. (N=796)	-0.0852	-0.0444	0.8011	15.5%
When it comes to politics, I would rather vote for women than for men. (N=787)	-0.0974	0.0767	0.7708	
The people I look up to most are women. (N=803)	0.2300	-0.1785	0.6575	

Factor Analysis
Political Authority and Leadership of Women



Multivariable Linear Regression Model
Political Authority and Leadership of Women

Variables	Mean Authority score	Women's authority based on "The Gender and Authority Measure"			
		Unstandardized OR (95% CI)	P-value	Standardized OR (95% CI)	P-value
Gender					
Male	2.26 (0.59)	Ref		Ref	
Female	2.46 (0.55)	1.87 (0.76, 2.98)	0.001	1.94 (0.78, 3.12)	0.001*
Marital status					
Never married	2.47 (0.58)	Ref		Ref	
Currently married	2.32 (0.57)	-1.55 (-2.85, -0.26)	0.019	-0.73 (-2.03, 0.58)	0.275
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	2.31 (0.62)	-2.26 (-4.69, 0.17)	0.069	-1.51 (-4.03, 1.02)	0.241
Educational status					
Never attended any school	2.24 (0.53)	Ref		Ref	
Primary	2.27 (0.56)	0.45 (-2.02, 2.91)	0.723	0.56 (-2.04, 3.16)	0.671
secondary school	2.35 (0.59)	2.62 (0.17, 5.06)	0.036	2.87 (0.28, 5.45)	0.03*
Higher education	2.40 (0.59)	3.09 (0.79, 5.41)	0.009	3.27 (0.72, 5.83)	0.012*
Employment status					
Employed	2.33 (0.60)	Ref		Ref	
Not employed	2.40 (0.55)	0.88 (-0.23, 2.00)	0.120	0.69 (-0.49, 1.88)	0.250

Multivariable Linear Regression Model
Political Authority and Leadership of Women

Findings Summary

There were two factors that emerged as significantly associated with women's authority:

- **Gender:** Females were more likely than males to support women's authority (OR 1.94; 95% CI: 0.78, 3.12).
- **Educational Status:** Education had a favorable and significant association with women's authority. Compared to respondents who never attended school, those who had completed secondary school (OR 2.87; 95% CI: 0.28, 5.45) and those with higher education (OR 3.27; 95% CI: 0.72, 5.83) favored women's authority.

Gender Role and Decision Making

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Factor Analysis
Gender Role and Decision Making

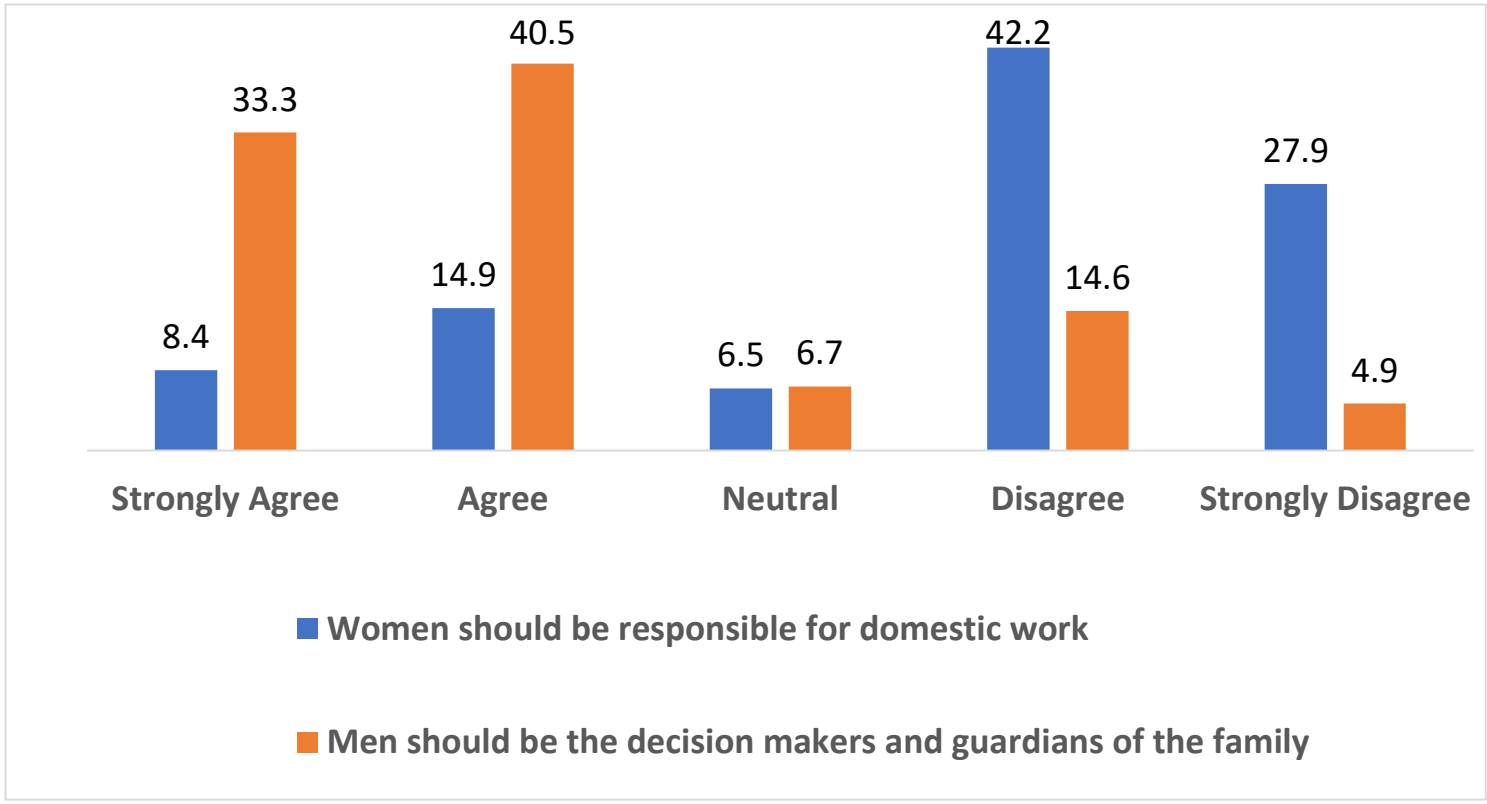
Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Variance Proportion
I think it is shameful when men engage in domestic work	0.7461	-0.0396	25.2%
A man needs to be tough	0.6814	0.0286	
A woman's most important role is to take care of the home and cook for the family	0.4829	0.4282	
It is a man's duty to exercise guardianship over his female relatives	-0.2396	0.7591	24.4%
Boys are responsible for the behaviour of their sisters, even if they are younger than their sisters	0.3118	0.6232	
A man should have the final word about decisions in the home	0.3221	0.5587	

The two factors together explained 49.6% of the variability.

Factor Analysis

- "Domestic work should be the sole responsibility of women"
- "Men should be the decision maker and exercise guardianship"

Factor Analysis
Gender Roles and Decision-Making



Multivariable Linear Regression Model
Gender Role and Decision Making

Variables	Mean Attitude score	Attitude score			
		Unstandardized OR (95% CI)	P-value	Standardized OR (95% CI)	P-value
Age category (in years)					
>50	2.81 (0.62)	Ref		Ref	
>40-50	2.92 (0.68)	0.22 (-0.76, 1.21)	0.659	-0.30 (-1.32, 0.72)	0.565
>30-40	2.97 (0.64)	0.84 (-0.05, 1.73)	0.064	-0.19 (-1.18, 0.81)	0.710
18-30	2.97 (0.65)	0.74 (-0.18, 1.65)	0.116	-0.15 (-1.42, 1.12)	0.815
Gender					
Male	2.84 (0.61)	Ref		Ref	
Female	3.00 (0.67)	0.75 (0.08, 1.42)	0.028	1.11 (0.35, 1.87)	0.004*
Marital status					
Never married	2.99 (0.67)	Ref		Ref	
Currently married	2.91 (0.63)	-0.75 (-1.54, 0.04)	0.063	-0.67 (-1.77, 0.42)	0.226
Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	2.83 (0.71)	-0.71 (-1.99, 0.57)	0.276	-0.33 (-1.92, 1.26)	0.684
Educational status					
No school	2.48 (0.66)	Ref		Ref	
Primary school	2.75 (0.71)	0.59 (-1.14, 2.32)	0.503	0.78 (-1.34, 2.91)	0.469
secondary school	2.87 (0.60)	1.36 (-0.31, 3.03)	0.111	1.43 (-0.76, 3.63)	0.201
Higher education	3.05 (0.61)	2.42 (0.80, 4.04)	0.003	2.33 (0.18, 4.47)	0.034*
Employment status					
Employed	2.96 (0.63)	Ref		Ref	
Not employed	2.87 (0.67)	-0.68 (-1.34, -0.01)	0.046	-0.91 (-1.67, -0.15)	0.019*

Multivariable Linear Regression Model
Gender Role and Decision Making

Findings Summary

There were three factors that emerged to be significantly associated with gender roles and decision-making:

- **Gender:** Compared to males, female respondents had a positive attitude towards women's non-traditional gender roles and decision-making (OR 1.11; 95% CI: 0.35, 1.87).
- **Education:** Higher education had a favorable and significant association with attitudes favoring women. Compared to respondents who never attended school, those with higher education (OR 2.33; 95% CI: 0.18, 4.47) had a positive attitude towards women's roles in decision-making within the household.
- **Employment**: Compared to those that were employed, those that were unemployed had a negative attitude towards women in decision-making roles (OR -0.91; 95% CI: -1.67, -0.15).

Political Empowerment challenging gender norms

- In accordance with the prevailing patriarchal beliefs and gender norms in the Qatari society, the findings indicated a more favourable attitude towards men holding leadership positions as well as being key decision makers in the household.

- Societal acceptance, cultural perceptions and traditional views on women's roles are still disadvantageous to the representation of females in the political roles. Women are also less preferred for decision-making positions.

Conclusions

- Achieving fundamental social change is a top-down approach and may help in overcoming cultural limitations and transforming gender-based stereotypes toward promoting equitable division of leadership positions and political authority among women and men.

- This study is among very few that have analytically addressed the issue of women's authority and involvement in key leadership as well as political positions in Qatari society. Future research may conduct qualitative approach to support the findings.

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