

# Political Gender Inequality in Egypt after the Arab Spring (2011–2013)

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**Abstract**—The present study examines political gender inequality in Egypt following the Arab Spring in 2011, when Egyptian women openly opposed the Mubarak regime. These women held public demonstrations for the recognition and improvement of their position in the public sphere, which raised hopes for better opportunities for women to change their status in Egyptian society. However, after the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, these hopes remained unfulfilled; for instance, women's representation in the Egyptian parliament is less than 2%. This phenomenon is analyzed using the qualitative method along with the descriptive analysis approach. This research investigates the root of gender inequality in a developing country. The results identify three factors that hinder gender equality in Egypt: economic (physical production and intense household duty), cultural (patrilocality and the son's role as a potential support figure for the elderly), and political regime shift (from military to the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* regime).

**Keywords**—gender inequality, Egyptian women, politics, Arab Spring

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is a global problem, with the Middle East being on the low end of world rankings. According to the *Global Gender Gap 2015* report published by the World Economic Forum, the Middle East has a *gender gap* of 59% (Yasmina, 2013). Egypt is one of the Middle Eastern countries with the lowest levels of women equality, ranking 136th of 145 countries; it is also ranked 135th in women's participation and economic opportunity, 115th in equality in education, and 136th in political empowerment of women (Knidiri, 2003).

The 2011 Arab Spring is an important event highlighted by the participation of women in the public sphere in the Middle East, especially Egypt. At that time, women and men had similar sentiments regarding the ruling regime. Asmaa Mahfouz, an Egyptian activist, stated, "All of us were there throwing stones, moving dead bodies here was no difference between men and women." Eman Hashim, an Egyptian blogger, described the significant role played by Egyptian women in the Arab Spring movement: "I remember all the old women who came to us with food and drinks in Tahrir Square. When it became so bloody that it was really hard for women to be in the front row, men knew that women were waiting meters away, with medicine, water, and words of support" (Hashim, 2012). Later, women's contribution in the Arab Spring movement would overthrow Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt after a 30-year reign.

The participation of Egyptian women in the public sphere during the Arab Spring was not adequately recognized because their struggle and sacrifice did not yield "equal" results. In the days following the Arab Spring, a sharp decline was observed in women's representation in the public sphere compared to that during the Mubarak regime. Women constitute less than 2% of the Egyptian parliament (9 out of 508 members) whereas they made up 12% of parliamentarians during Mubarak's reign (Bar'el, 2012). The Mubarak regime has set aside 64 seats for women from powerful parties in the parliament (Bar'el, 2012).

Gender inequality in Egypt has been examined by several scholars such as Hayat Alvi, who wrote the article "Women's Rights Movements in the Arab Spring: Major Victories or Failure for Human Rights?" This paper analyzes how the women's empowerment movement in the Middle East played a role in increasing women's political participation (Hayat Alvi: 2015). Using comparative methods and Sen's freedom-based development theory, this study compares political participation in Tunisia and Egypt after the Arab Spring. Another article discussing post-Arab Spring gender inequality in Egypt is "Gender Quality in a Time of Change: Gender Mainstreaming after Egypt's Arab Spring" by Farah Gaman Shash and Carie L. Forde. Here, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews to analyze how gender mainstreaming was implemented in Egypt after the Arab Spring. The results of this study showed that despite the slow progress of gender mainstreaming, such efforts could enhance gender equality in post-Arab Spring Egypt (Shash, Forden: 2016).

From the abovementioned works, we can assume that no studies have attempted to explain the root causes of the worsening gender equality in the political field for women after the Arab Spring. The novelty of this paper is the researcher's comprehensive explanation of gender equality using its theoretical roots aiming for an in-depth understanding of the issue. According to Jayachandran (2014) in her paper "The Roots of Gender Quality in Developing Countries," gender inequality is shaped by economic and cultural factors. The relation between gender and the economy is measured by the following indicators: (1) a production system based on physical strength and (2) intense housework.

In a well-developed economy, a shift is observed from the agrarian to the manufacturing and service-oriented sectors. This transition to the service sector creates many opportunities for women, as it required less intensive labor

than the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. However, if the economy remains under transition, then the agricultural and manufacturing sectors play larger roles, which then hinders women's economic participation.

Economic development is characterized by better physical infrastructure, more sophisticated technology, and higher domestic income. This greatly improves women's lives in terms of household chores, which previously entailed collecting firewood for cooking, for example; now they could save time by cooking on electric stoves. Such innovations can reduce women's workload and give them more opportunities to participate in the public sphere.

According to Jayachandran, the following are the two cultural factors that cause gender inequality (2014): (1) patrilocality and (2) male children supporting elders.

Patrilocality refers to married women living with or near their in-laws; this is one of the cultural practices in the Middle East. When a woman is married, she is believed to no longer belong to her maternal home, and she joins her husband's family. In this background, parents invest more in their sons' education and health than in their daughters' because the sons stay with the parents while the daughters move away to their marital homes.

Consistent with the patrilocality concept is the tradition that male children will support and assist their parents in the future, which is similar to the practices of some countries such as China and India. This tradition significantly reinforces the belief that sons are of greater value than daughters.

The present study explores the causes of gender inequality among Egyptian women in the post-Arab Spring period. Here, the researcher uses Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis method, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification (Miles, 1994).

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. Egyptian Women's Involvement in the Arab Spring

On January 18, 2011, a 26-year-old blogger, Asmaa Mahfouz, posted a video on Facebook calling for a demonstration at Tahrir Square to protest against the Mubarak regime (FIDH, 2012).

*If we have honors and want to go to Tahrir Square on 25 January . . . We will demand our fundamental human rights as human beings . . . will go to Tahrir Square. I will say no to corruption! I will say no to this system! (Asmaa Mahfouz, video blog January 18, 2011)*

Then, on February 11, 2011, the demonstrators demanded the ouster of President Mubarak. Egyptian women and men participated in the protests and urged for the installation of a civil government (FIDH, 2012). In an interview with FIDH, Amal Abdel Hadi as an Egyptian activist and feminist and also founder of Egyptian New Foundation (Susanne Cordes:2011) stated that

*[w]omen of all ages and all walks of life are involved in security, organizing, writing, slogans, shouting and sleeping in Tahrir Square. Housewives*

*came to protest with their children. Activists from all political movements participated in demonstration. Women and men were comrades in the protests. Women were not afraid. We witnessed no instances of sexual harassment. There is a sense of complete respect, support and solidarity towards women. (FIDH: 2012)*

A sense of optimism spread among Egyptian women at that time regarding the recognition of their participation and existence in the public sphere and the actualization of gender equality in Egypt. Egyptian women's struggles during the Arab Spring garnered support from the Egyptian civil society in their quest to reform their position in public life.

Some of the women participated in demonstrations and instigated protests directly or through social media while some other Egyptian women organized logistics and mobilized people to join the rallies. The event was later published in *Al Jazeera* titled "Women of the Revolution." Egyptian activist Gigi Ibrahim described the role of Egyptian women in protecting demonstrators from attacks by Mubarak's supporters. In the evening on February 2, 2011, Ibrahim claimed that Egyptian women were at the frontline, and they warned other demonstrators as danger approached; women also set up temporary clinics (Naib, 2011). Salma El Tarzi, a filmmaker who participated in the protests at Tahrir Square, stated, "When the man saw that women were fighting in front line that they changed their perception on us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now" (Naib, 2011).

Gallup survey data shows that 30% of demonstrators in Egypt's Arab Spring revolution were women (Gallup, 2012). Although not as many as men, Egyptian women played a significant role in the movement, as revealed by Isobel Coleman, a member of an overseas relationship council, who claims that women's participation in the early stages of the movement provided tremendous legitimacy and drew attention to the anti-Mubarak movement

The existence of women in the anti-Mubarak movement also succeeded in counteracting the *Baltagi* strategy planned by the regime. This strategy aims to communicate an image of the demonstrators as a radical group. Several people from the Egyptian government infiltrated the protests to shout sentences with a radical tone, aiming to show international media that the protesters were radical and vulgar Islamists (Amar: 2011). This manufactured image of the demonstrators by the Egyptian government was successfully countered by the participation of women in protests as a symbol of their emancipation.

This shows the importance of women's involvement in the Arab Spring revolution. Egyptian women's struggles and sacrifices during the Arab Spring sought not only to oppose Hosni Mubarak's regime but also to prove their resilience and strength to their male counterparts. Through this, Egyptian women hoped that the Arab Spring can be a moment of change for their position in Egyptian society in both sociopolitical and cultural terms.

### B. Women's Status after the Arab Spring

In Egypt, Tahrir Square is known as an area prone to rape and other sexual violence. However, during the 18-day revolution to overthrow the Mubarak regime, no incidents of

violence and harassment were reported by women in the area even though at that time women were present in Tahrir Square from morning to night (FIDH, 2014).

Even Egyptian women activists stated that “the first 18 days of the revolution were unbelievable moments. Tahrir Square is the safest place in the world. The men did not even verbally abuse us. Whereas before we used to be the subject of their daily violence. However, this period became a mere euphoria when violence happened again to women and even worse than before” (FIDH, 2014). On the day Mubarak was overthrown, a journalist named Laura Logan was violently attacked by a crowd of more than 40 men when she was reporting the news in Tahrir Square (Stelter, 2011). The significant change in women’s conditions after the revolution shows that women may have been used only to overthrow the Mubarak regime; after the regime collapsed, their status returned as before.

Besides experiencing violence, Egyptian women also struggle with consolidating their position in the political process during the transition period following the fall of Mubarak regime. Shortly after President Mubarak stepped down, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) announced the formation of a committee to propose an amendment to the constitution. The committee consisted of eight men (FIDH, 2012).

The SCAF’s decision triggered widespread protest from Egyptian women. On March 8, 2011, they gathered in Tahrir Square to mark International Women’s Day and rallied against the lack of women’s representation in the Egyptian constitutional amendment committee and in the process of political policy-making during Egypt’s transitional period (FIDH, 2012).

However, these protests led to violent acts perpetrated by men against the Egyptian women protesters. An angry man beat up the demonstrators and rebuked them, claiming women’s rights were against Islamic values and teachings. At the same time, the Egyptian military escorted the women demonstrators and forced them to take virginity tests (Coleman, 2011). In December 2011, the women demonstrators were brutally beaten by members of the Egyptian army, which Egyptian women strongly criticized (Fahim, 2012).

Violence against women activists continued. In December 2011, a soldier removed a woman’s *abaya*, and the woman was thrown to the ground and kicked. Photos depicting the situation spread on the Internet, in which the woman is seen half-naked (Hafez, 2014). This shows the abusive and discriminatory treatment of women carried out by the authorities in post-Arab Spring Egypt. Women activists are considered sinners and thus deserve to be treated that way.

Besides violence and abuse, Egyptian women also suffered unfair political representation in the Egyptian parliament in the post-Mubarak regime. In 2009, the Mubarak regime passed a law reserving 64 seats for women in parliament. In the 2010 elections, 380 Egyptian women ran for the seats, and 62 were elected to parliament, which was inaugurated by the president. This corresponded to just 12% female representation in the 518 parliament seats. However, after the Arab Spring, SCAF decided to remove the 64-seat quota for women approved by President Mubarak in May 2011. Although some women were nominated, they

were generally at the bottom of the list. Consequently, women won only 9 of the total 508 seats (2%) of the Egyptian parliament (FIDH, 2012).

In an interview with FIDH, Dr. Hoda Elsadda, a member of the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) stated, “Political groups do not make women’s right a priority. This includes liberal and Islamist parties. None of political parties challenged the fact that no quota was imposed for women. Women’s right was compromised by all political groups” (FIDH, 2012). Egyptian women could not achieve higher representation in political participation after their struggles in the Arab Spring movement.

Egyptian women also suffered discrimination in the legal context. From 2000 to 2009, some successful legislative reforms marginally increased the protection of women’s rights. In 2008, the government adopted a new law on children (Number 126) that set the marrying age at 16 for men and 18 for women. Other reforms were related to divorce and custody issues. Some of these reforms were opposed by both secular and Islamist opposition groups.

The representatives of the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) have long criticized laws regarding women and children’s rights. After the fall of President Mubarak’s regime, the *Salafi* group suggested reforming the law since it was considered illegal and not in accordance with *Shari’a* law. In July 2011, the chairman of the Religious Court wrote a draft law abolishing the *khula* procedure in divorce and restoring practices that allowed husbands to forcefully return their “noncompliant” wives to their maternal families (FIDH, 2012). The abolition of *khula* procedure means that women have no right to divorce their husbands despite being unhappy in marriage; the right to file for divorce is only for men.

Discrimination against women after the Arab Spring revolution, in both political and legal contexts, indicate that several factors hindered social reforms that may lead to gender equality in Egypt. The efforts of Egyptian women in the revolution are likely to be forgotten by Egyptian society, particularly by male elites who served the country. The status quo is that men want to maintain their long-standing domination in Egyptian society.

### C. Factors Contributing to Gender Inequality in Egypt

#### 1). Egypt’s economic state post-Arab Spring

##### a) Egypt’s production system based on physical strength

The following are data on some important sectors that highly contributed to Egypt’s GDP from 2011 to 2012.

Figure 1 shows three major sectors that significantly contributed to Egypt’s economy during the said period: trade, finance, and insurance; mining sectors and manufacturing industries, and agricultural industries. All these sectors are labor intensive and male dominated, with no major contribution from females.

Tourism is one sector that provides women opportunities to participate in the economy. However, after the Arab Spring, Egypt’s tourism revenue dramatically decreased by 29.8%; in 2010, it generated an income of \$12.5 million, which dropped to \$8.8 million in 2011 (The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Egypt, 2011). Table 1 presents data



on the country's decline in tourism income in 2011 post-Arab Spring.

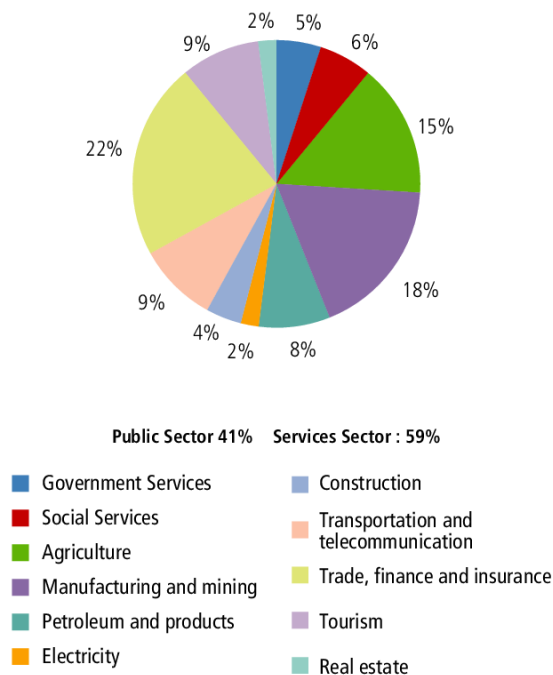


Fig. 1 Egypt's economic sector and its contribution to GDP in 2011–2012 (Source: Yasser R Abdel-Fattah, et Al., Egypt's Science and Technology Parks Outlook: A Focus on SRTACity (City for Scientific Research and Technology Applications), WTR 2013;2: 96-108)

TABLE 1. POST-ARAB SPRING INCOME FROM THE TOURISM SECTOR (PERCENTAGE)<sup>a</sup>

	2000	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Egypt</b>	6.8	27.0	17.2	-2.9	16.0	-31.5	-
<b>Lebanon</b>	10.3	6.2	9.0	13.3	14.3	13.6	-
<b>Libya</b>	115.4	-59.4	0.0	60.6	6.9	-	-
<b>Tunisia</b>	-6.7	12.5	15.9	-9.8	-1.4	-27.3	-
<b>Syria</b>	4.9	40.7	6.9	19.0	66.8	Not available	-

Source: World Bank, International Tourism Income (2013)

Thus, the role of women in Egypt's economy has been increasingly marginalized since the Arab Spring, exacerbated by Egypt's economic situation, which has not yet recovered. The new government is yet to succeed in dealing with economic problems such as the high unemployment rate of young people, crony capitalism, poor infrastructure, inefficient bureaucracy, and higher wealth inequality (Khan, Miller, 2016).

Egypt's deteriorating economic situation following the Arab Spring had a greater effect on women than on men. Limited job opportunities in the service sectors, especially tourism, worsened the economic condition of Egyptian women. Moreover, mothers were responsible for the daily needs of their families. This implies that the Arab Spring caused the Egyptian economy to plummet while also indirectly adding to the suffering of Egyptian women.

#### b). Women's heavy household work

Egyptians believe that women should do all household chores, such as cooking, washing, and others, while men are the final decision-makers. A survey showed that 86.4% of men and 76.7% of women believed that the basic role of women was to take care of the house and cook for their

families, and about 90.3% of men and 58.5% of women stated that men were the final decision-makers in the home (El-Behary, 2017). This would then explain the small number of Egyptian women involved in the labor market in Egypt. The following data show Egyptian women's level of participation in the labor market in 2011.

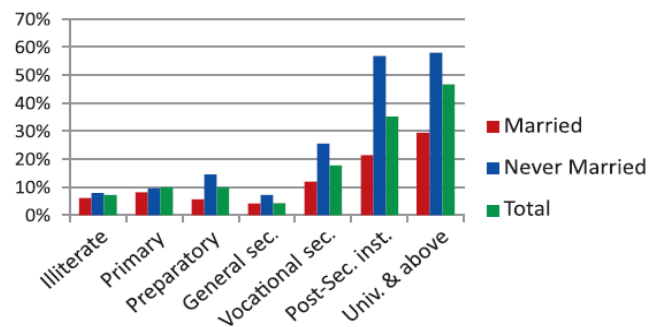


Fig. 2 Labor force participation rate (Egyptian women aged 15–29 based on education and marital status) 2011 (Source: Survey of Young People on Egypt Policy Brief Series, Female Disadvantage in The Egyptian Labor Market: A Youth Perspective, page 3).

the labor market claim that their main impediment is their role as housewives. In addition, 87% of young graduate Egyptian women do not join the workforce since they are forced to assume household responsibilities once they are married (Survey of Young People on Egypt Policy Brief Series, 2011).

Hoda Gamel, a 22-year-old Egyptian woman, narrated the story of her daily life to *The New York Times* on June 13, 2010. She stated that she wakes up every day at 7:00 a.m., prepares breakfast for her two brothers, drives them to school, returns home, irons all the family clothes, and goes to work to sell hijabs at a mall. In the evening, after a 90-minute-long traffic jam in Cairo, she arrives home late, has dinner, studies, and finally sleeps. Then, the next morning, she starts the same routine (Mona El-naggar, 2010).

Hoda Gamel's narrative shows that although women decide to work and continue to do house chores, they experience a heavier burden than men. With low economic status, an Egyptian family cannot hire and pay for a household assistant. Therefore, women must stay at home and do the household chores, meaning women can play a dual role as housewives and career women with heavier burden and routines than men.

Based on a study conducted by El-antery, *The Value of Women's Unpaid Housework in Egypt*, the estimated value of Egyptian women's domestic work is 307.6 to 445 billion Egyptian pounds, which is 20.4%–30.2% of the country's total GDP. Besides their working hours, women spend 30.25 hours per week on domestic work; this figure is large when compared with that of men, who average only 4.19 hours per week. Women also spend an additional 10.24 hours per week caring for children, parents, and sick family members while men do the same for only 4.19 hours per week (El-Antery: 2012). The results of this study indicate that Egyptian women spend more hours working and have more responsibilities than men, but their work is not properly valued.

The severity of the workload imbalance between women and men is a heavy burden for women. It also directly inhibits women's involvement in the public space regarding sociopolitical issues and preserves their marginal position within the family and also in society. Because they are not given the same opportunities and access to participate in the community as men, they do not even have time for self-improvement and discussions about politics and social phenomena, as they spend most of their time serving other family members.

## 2) Cultural factors that cause gender inequalities in Egypt

### a) Patrilocality

In Egypt, marriage is traditionally follows patrilocality, which is a tradition inherent in certain societies where married couples live with their husbands' families. According to the *Survey of Young People in Egypt 2011*, 40% of married young men continue to stay with their parents, and 36% of married young women move to their husband's homes to stay with the in-laws. Only a few of them live with the female's family after marriage (about 0.8% females and 1.4% males) or live with others (*Survey of Young People on Egypt Policy Brief Series*, 2011).

On the other hand, the survey also reveals that 45% of unmarried Egyptian young females want to live with their in-laws after marriage (*Survey of Young People on Egypt Policy Brief Series*, 2011). This indicates that patrilocal understanding and values remain strongly embraced by Egyptian society until 2011, and married women become part of the husband's family. Marriage for Egyptian women is even considered only as a transformation of their dependence from their fathers to their husbands. Patrilocal values also lower a woman's position in her maternal home since she would one day leave the core family. Hence, parents prefer to invest in the future of their sons rather than that of their daughters.

An Egyptian government survey indicates that women comprise 82% of all young Egyptian groups who have never experienced education (IDSC, 2010), and 13% of young women in Egypt have never attended school. Meanwhile, only 3% of Egyptian men are uneducated (IDSC, 2010). Parents in Egypt clearly prefer to spend on their sons' education rather than that of their daughters. This is based on the 2015 Global Gender Gap data from the World Economic Forum, which shows a literacy rate of 82% for Egyptian men and only around 62% for women (Hanlon, 2017).

### b) Male children supporting elders

According to Kandiyoti, Muslim society in the Middle East is characterized by classical patriarchal values (Kandiyoti, 1988). In Egypt, relationships in the extended family evolve through the *patriarchal kin contract* (S Joseph, 1993). Children in Egypt generally stay in their parents' homes until they are married. In this case, when a daughter is married, her obligations as a child to her parents convert to responsibilities to her husband's family. This characteristic is inseparable from the previously described patrilocality.

Sons will continue to remain in their core biological family, compounding the belief that they are more reliable than daughters in guaranteeing support to the elders. This assumption leads to a more accommodating future for men than for women in Egyptian families, even more so because

parents are worried about their old age. Moreover, the role of men in Egyptian families is believed to be that of a provider of economic welfare while women assume the responsibility of domestic work (Jowkar, 1986).

This then led to the tendency of Egyptian people to want more boys than girls. In the Arab world, the word *Abu Banaat* ("the father of a daughter") is an insult among men (Greenhalg: 1985). In addition, a daughter's devotion is expressed by obeying family values and expectations, staying at home, and preserving inherited cultural values while that of a son is successfully articulated in education and being the breadwinner for families (Giuliani, Olivari, Alferi: 2017). While the basic purpose of this thinking is for women to not bear the heavy burden of being breadwinners, its negative impact is that women are considered to not require high education and not participate in the public domain, as they are only required to stay home.

These two factors are the common causes of gender inequality in Egypt. However, in the context of the issue, especially in post-Arab Spring politics, the economic sector is more relevant in the face of Egypt's worsening economy. Meanwhile, the 2011 Arab Spring did not bring significant changes in cultural factors (i.e., patrilocality and the importance of men's position in the family).

Political gender inequality in Egypt is influenced by both economic and cultural aspects. However, the present study found that the ruling political regime also plays a role. The massive Arab Spring in Egypt aimed to revolutionize the dictatorial military government of Hosni Mubarak into a more transparent government. Thus, the significant changes in post-Arab Spring society in Egypt define a shift in the political sphere.

## 3) Political factors that cause gender inequality in Egypt

After the Arab Spring and the 2012 presidential election, President-elect Muhammad Morsi promised to improve women's rights; however, the opposite occurred (Khafagy, 2013). The Freedom and Justice Party of Egypt (FJP), a party of the *Ikhwanul Muslimin*, expressed some views on the position of Egyptian women in the political sector (Dyer, 2013):

- The FJP considered the role of women in the 2011 revolution as merely a form of support to men's actions, and it is not regarded as a political act of women with its own agenda for their personal interest.
- During the Morsi regime, the FJP blamed anti-Morsi women demonstrators for exposing themselves and inviting men to sexually abuse them.
- President Morsi clearly expelled women from high positions within the FJP. Women were only given supportive and administrative roles and not positions of influence and related to the decision-making process.
- The FJP refused to implement the quotas for women's representation in the Egyptian government, which, in fact, is one of the most important demands from women communities struggling for women's rights. This led to a decrease in the percentage of women in the Egyptian parliament post-Arab Spring.

Moreover, the relation between the powers of the FJP and gender inequality is evident in the increasing number of

sexual harassment cases by women who protested and engaged in demonstrations during Morsi's regime. Data from the United Nations Entity of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women shows that 99.3% of women in Egypt have experienced some form of sexual harassment. In addition, 96.5% reported having experienced sexual harassment through touching, which becomes the most frequent sexual harassment (UN, 2013).

The worsening condition of women in society during the Morsi regime (Ikhwanul Muslimin) is attributable to two things: first, this regime fosters a culture that blames women for any sexual harassment they experience, and, second, the regime creates an environment that views sexual harassment as a disgrace and therefore needs to be hidden (Dyer, 2013)

Representatives from the FJP and Ikhwanul Muslimin repeatedly blamed the victims of sexual harassment cases. This is evident from the statement of Reda El-Hefnawy, a former FJP representative at the UN Human Rights Council, on who is responsible for the increasing cases of sexual harassment: "Women should not mingle with men during protest. How can the Ministry of Interior be tasked with protecting a lady who stand among group of men?" (Taha, 2013).

For the Morsi government, the rampant sexual harassment of women was a consequence of their presence in public protests and the manner in which they physically present themselves (Dyer, 2013). However, the reality is far from the government's allegations. According to a study by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), the number of sexual abuse victims who are wear the hijab or niqab is 72%, which is consistent with the total number of women who wear these garments in Egyptian society (Egypt Unfa, 2011). Rebecca Chiao, director and founder of Harras Map, also contradicting the government's allegations, said in an interview that even women who wear veils become targets of sexual harassment in Egypt; however, they do not report these incidents to the authorities because they fear being disgraced and bringing shame to their families.

The Morsi regime also helped construct this perception of embarrassment and shame for the families of the sexually harassed. Islamist groups in coalition with the Ikhwanul Muslimin forbade women to tell their experiences of sexual abuse and rape. They even portrayed women who did otherwise as shameless and irreverent monsters (ogres). Ahmad Abdullah (Shaykh Abu Islam), a Salafist scholar, stated that such women are like demons, arguing further that raping women is halal (permitted), and suggested that the women who joined the protests must not be shown any sympathy (Al Arabiya, 2013).

In March 2013, the Morsi government issued a policy that opposed the UN Commission on the Status of Women's draft statement on restrictions on all forms of violence against women (Badran, 2013). This shows how the Morsi regime reacts negatively to matters relating to gender equality and women's emancipation in Egypt.

The Morsi regime, which came to power as a result of the Arab Spring in 2011, discriminated against women in Egypt. The expectation that women's rights would be protected after the revolution was lost because the government positioned itself as a barrier to Egyptian women's aspirations and freedom of speech. The ruling regime in Egypt, both secular and religious, uses Islamic values to legitimize

discriminatory actions and oppose the existence of gender equality in the country.

### III CONCLUSION

#### A. Final Thoughts

The struggle by Egyptian women during the Arab Spring and the recognition of their existence in the public sphere during that time were expected to create an opportunity to improve gender equality in Egypt. However, at the end of President Mubarak's regime, the reality was that women's existence in society were more neglected and ignored in political, legal, and sociocultural terms. In addition, women continue to experience discrimination and violence.

The study results show two common factors that impede gender equality in Egyptian society. First, the Egyptian economy is dominated by sectors based on physical strength, such as mining, manufacturing, and agriculture. Moreover, women are considered as solely responsible for household chores, which prevents them from participating in the workforce. Second is the cultural factor, which entails patrilocal values in marriage and the belief that men are more reliable in ensuring their parents' future than women, who will eventually become part of their husbands' families. Both factors hindered Egyptian women's efforts in achieving gender equality despite their sacrifices in the Arab Spring revolution being recognized by Egyptian society.

In addition, the researcher found that, in the context of the Arab Spring, the most significant factor is the worse state of gender equality in Egypt because of changes in the Egyptian regime. Morsi's leadership, along with the FJP, has worsened women's status especially in politics, as government actions prevent women's participation in politics and the public sphere.

#### B. Suggestion

The study results found that the three factors obstructing gender equality in Egyptian society originate from outside women and is not an internal factor. Thus, in their struggle to improve gender equality in their country, Egyptian women's efforts are not enough. To implement this change in Egypt, women need the support of the ruling elite and other parties. The current government is expected to pay attention to the issues of gender inequality especially in politics, where Egyptian women have shown great potential.

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