



# Legal Empowerment of Women and Its Relation to Achieving Social Balance in Port Said Governorate

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the actual extent of legal empowerment among women in Port Said Governorate, Egypt, as well as the social barriers impeding their progress. Additionally, the study seeks to propose strategies to address these obstacles. Using a sample social survey method, a questionnaire was developed and administered to employed women. Analysis was conducted through the lenses of structural-functional theory, social roles, and feminist perspectives, particularly examining legal positions within the National Council for Women and female lawyers in society. The findings highlight persistent societal views that women's capabilities are not suited to certain roles, often confining them to domestic spheres due to traditional gender norms. Furthermore, women's representation in legal and leadership roles remains notably lower than men's.

## 1. Introduction

Throughout history, the role of women in various aspects of political, economic, social, cultural, and legal realms has been a subject of significant contemplation. From 1981 to the present, the evolution of women's laws has seen numerous changes and advancements. Efforts have been dedicated to enhancing women's political, economic, and social empowerment, particularly within the judiciary, with the aim of diminishing forms of discrimination against

women.

The initiative began with the establishment of the Committee for the Defense of Women and Family Rights in 1985. This committee aimed to advocate for the amendment of the Personal Status Law to promote greater reform. However, in 1985, the Constitutional Court deemed the proposed amendments to the Personal Status Law unconstitutional, leading to the withdrawal of the new law. Additionally, in 1987, the Constitutional Court ruled to eliminate the quota designated for

women in parliamentary assemblies.

In 1991, a decision was made to dissolve the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, transferring its funds to the Women of Peace Association. The former association was known for its slogan, "Arab Women's Solidarity." The Progressive Women's Conference took place in 1992. Subsequently, in 1993, several women's organizations and associations were established in preparation for the Population and Development Conference. During this time, efforts were also made to enhance the status of women in public life through the amendment of Election Law No. 38 of 1972, which mandated the allocation of at least 30 seats for women.

Following these events, the establishment of the National Council for Women took place, serving as an official entity dedicated to advocating for women's rights. As a result of persistent efforts, women began to attain relatively high positions. The appointment of the first female judge and the first female official came after a challenging battle to safeguard women's rights and demonstrate their capability and aptitude for leadership roles.

Regarding the Shura Council, there were initially 18 seats designated for women, comprising 6.8% of the total council members. However, the situation took a turn for the worse in the most recent session between 2005 and 2020, with the number of seats occupied by women reduced to 8, representing only 1.7% of the total council members. This marked a significant and concerning decline in women's participation rates in parliamentary councils.

In 2004, 72 women were appointed out of a total of 1,912 members in the administrative parliaments and the State Litigation Authority. This meant that women's participation did not surpass 5% of the overall composition. In response to this disparity, the state introduced the "women's quota" system to address societal barriers. This system aimed to encourage a positive differentiation for women and grant them the opportunity for conditional participation. Participation is viewed as a fundamental aspect of citizenship, highlighting the equality of all individuals in rights, responsibilities, and political representation within society.

Despite prior efforts aimed at boosting women's involvement across various societal institutions, numerous negative values, customs, and traditions continue to hinder women's active participation in parliamentary assemblies. The remedy lies in eradicating the intellectual illiteracy prevalent in society and actively working to rectify misconceptions and ensure the proper implementation of international laws and treaties.

It is undeniable that laws can merely be symbolic unless they are put into action and enforced. With the evolution of political landscapes, particularly since the January 25, 2011 revolution, the role of Egyptian women in society has become increasingly evident. This notion further solidified during the June 30 revolution. However, despite these advancements, Egyptian women still face challenges due to the lack of implementation of certain legal provisions that would ensure their equal rights without discrimination based on gender.

The findings of previous studies, such as the research by [Khoury et al. \(2006\)](#), highlighted that countries like Syria were still influenced by longstanding traditions. These traditions dictate that regardless of the high levels of education and professional achievements women attain, they remain under male authority. Similarly, Tharim Kazem's 2016 study on Iraqi women's legal empowerment identified economic and personal barriers that hinder their progress. Another study by [Othman \(2016\)](#) echoed these findings. Major obstacles facing women include financial instability, dependence on men for income, and the absence of supportive laws and regulations enabling their access to leadership roles. These research gaps motivated the current study to address these challenges and provide solutions to eliminate the social obstacles women continue to face.

### 1.1. Research Problem

The study aims to uncover the societal barriers hindering the legal empowerment of Egyptian women and how these obstacles affect their ability to engage in legal and political spheres, particularly in leadership roles. Despite

the resounding calls for democracy and public freedoms, the involvement of Egyptian women in legal affairs and leadership positions remains limited and unbalanced. Despite the introduction of laws that emphasize their political and legal participation, particularly in Port Said Governorate, there appears to be a substantial gap in the effective implementation of these laws.

Despite the endorsement of legal empowerment by numerous international institutions and the Egyptian government's inclusion of empowerment clauses in its constitution and laws, the practical implementation of these measures has been lacking. This is evident from the numerous instances of abuses against women and prevalent social discrimination across various sectors. This realization motivated the researcher to delve into these issues, aiming to expose, analyze the root causes, and propose solutions to address them. The goal is to actively promote the legal empowerment of Egyptian women in Port Said Governorate through systematic actions.

Given the aforementioned points, there are numerous scientific and societal reasons for undertaking this study. It aims to examine various assertions linked to feminist theory and assess their validity within the context of Egyptian social dynamics. This endeavor contributes to the advancement of sociological understanding, recognizing that women constitute half of society. Additionally, the study intends to shed light on the barriers hindering the implementation of legal empowerment for women in society, as well as their inherent roles and practices within societal norms.

## 1.2. Significance of Study

The empowerment of women in the contemporary era has become an undeniable necessity, especially with the rapid advancement of global communication tools. These advancements have transformed the world into a closely connected community, enabling individuals to learn about various lifestyles and aspects of human existence across the globe. Particularly for women, this interconnectedness highlights that others have achieved empowerment, granting them equal opportunities

with men. It encourages them to compete vigorously in numerous political, economic, and other social spheres.

Numerous studies have revealed that women globally stand on equal ground with men. It is undeniable that some women wield more influence than men, particularly in certain matters. Strong women play a crucial role in altering and advancing the economic, social, and political landscape when their positive contributions are activated within the societal framework (Narayanan, 2017, p. 53).

The theoretical significance of this research lies in its exploration of previous studies and scientific theories related to the legal empowerment of women, particularly regarding their access to leadership roles and the fulfillment of their personal rights. It aims to illuminate the concept of women's empowerment from a legal perspective and the quest for equality between women and men.

The practical significance of this study is threefold:

1. It aims to pinpoint the social barriers hindering Egyptian women's legal participation, which in turn fosters their legal and developmental engagement. By identifying relevant laws and regulations pertaining to women, this research aims to promote the legal empowerment of Egyptian women. Additionally, it seeks to enhance Egyptian women's awareness of their social rights and their eligibility for certain leadership positions.
2. This study responds to recommendations from previous research that highlighted the need for investigations into the obstacles facing Egyptian women's participation. It strives to establish and advocate for a set of proposals that can serve as a foundational framework for eliminating these obstacles.
3. The practical significance also stems from the potential application of field research results. The study seeks to leverage these findings to address the social barriers obstructing women's legal empowerment, offering tangible solutions based on empirical data.

### 1.3. Aims of Study

This study has several objectives aimed at understanding the social obstacles to the legal empowerment of women in Port Said Governorate. Firstly, it seeks to assess the current status of women's legal empowerment in the region. Secondly, the study aims to identify the specific social barriers that hinder Egyptian women's legal empowerment. Thirdly, it intends to draw conclusions regarding the future prospects of legal empowerment for Egyptian women. Finally, the study aims to develop strategies to enhance the legal empowerment of Egyptian women, as perceived by the research sample.

### 1.4. Research Questions

The research aims to address a central inquiry: What are the social barriers hindering the legal empowerment of Egyptian women?

To answer this overarching question, the study will explore the following sub-questions:

1. What is the current state of women's legal empowerment in Port Said Governorate?
2. What are the specific social obstacles impeding the legal empowerment of Egyptian women?
3. How can we envision the future of legal empowerment for Egyptian women?
4. Lastly, what strategies can be proposed to activate the legal empowerment of Egyptian women based on the perspectives of the research participants?

## 2. Research Concepts and Procedural Concepts

This part of the research clarifies the key concepts or keywords, discusses scholars' viewpoints on these concepts related to the research topic, and presents the procedural concepts that form the foundation of the study. Some of the concepts utilized in the paper include: social obstacles and legal empowerment of women.

### 2.1. The Concept of Social Obstacles

The concept of obstacles in organizational thought was first introduced by Robert Merton, who highlighted the unforeseen outcomes of

bureaucratic systems. These outcomes lead to imbalances and disruptions, underlying the hidden dysfunctions (Al-Hassani, 1999).

The philosophical dictionary defines disability as anything that hampers thought and will due to internal or external factors, and obstacles to growth are the factors preventing a living being from reaching its specific kind of perfection. These hindrances can be natural, such as physical deficiencies or illnesses, economic, like poverty, social, such as outdated customs and traditions, political, such as tyranny and injustice, or psychological, like fear and anxiety. Often, corruption can impede social and economic progress, or in older mental frameworks, hinder scientific and cultural advancements. However, the awareness of obstacles often motivates individuals to overcome them, especially when coupled with determination, courage, confidence, and faith. The stronger one's ambition for perfection, the greater the inclination to surpass the confines of reality (Saliba, 1994, p. 39).

*The Dictionary of Social Sciences Terms* defines a functional obstacle or impediment as "any outcomes or processes that restrict the adaptation or compatibility of the social system, which may also encompass pressure and tension at the structural level. Racial discrimination is identified as a functional flaw within society, emphasizing the principles of freedom and equality" (Badawi, 1993, p. 12).

Procedurally, obstacles can be described as challenges and hindrances that hinder an individual's path towards achieving their goals. These barriers often originate from various sources such as family, education, customs, traditions, and societal norms. The individual endeavors to create strategies aimed at overcoming these challenges in order to attain their desired goals and objectives.

### 2.2. The Concept of Empowerment

In linguistic terms, the word "empowerment" derives from the verb "makkn," which in its infinitive form signifies a lofty status, akin to the position of an individual among others, denoting greatness among them (Farouk, 2011, p. 15). Linguistically, "empowerment" also denotes a high status and the ability to exert power over



something; to empower a thing means to have authority over it, granting it power and control (The Intermediate Dictionary, 1983, p. 917).

In terminological terms, empowerment can be defined as a strategy aimed at assisting individuals, groups, and societies in gaining control over their circumstances to achieve their objectives. This enables them to actively contribute to improving their own and others' quality of life. Empowerment represents a form of external support provided by enlightened authorities within society, with the expectation that all citizens are viewed through a lens of responsibility. It serves to advance the development process within society (Saleh, 2002, p. 232).

For some, empowerment is viewed as a concept intertwined with self-actualization and autonomy, aimed at bolstering an individual's capacity for free choice, active participation, and decision-making. This enables individuals to effectively engage in all aspects of political, economic, and social life. Empowerment is gauged by assessing women's involvement in political and economic spheres, as well as their control over economic and social resources (National Development Goals Report, 2005, p. 32).

Empowerment serves as a mechanism through which individuals and groups are supported in taking charge of their circumstances, accomplishing their objectives, and enhancing their capacities to work towards improving their quality of life. This involves developing personal, social, and political skills to assume roles and make decisions, either individually or collectively, in order to address and change adverse situations they may encounter (Abdel Hamid, 2000, p. 101).

Empowerment is the process through which women undergo individual or collective transformations that impact power dynamics in their lives. This results in increased self-confidence and the capacity to confront inequalities between themselves and men (Al-Ahmad, 2016).

The researcher arrived at a procedural understanding of empowerment, delineating a precise strategy with a series of mechanisms that

enable individuals to exercise their social and legal rights, ultimately aiming for the advancement and development of society.

### 2.3. The Concept of Women's Empowerment

Empowering women entails enhancing their practical and intellectual abilities, advancing their educational achievements both in theory and practice, creating employment prospects, delivering healthcare and related support services to alleviate household responsibilities, boosting their confidence and consciousness of their significance and role in leadership and decision-making positions, challenging societal norms regarding their roles, eliminating customs and traditions that impede women, and promoting a culture of fairness and gender equality (Abu Hamdan, 2014, p. 316).

Women's empowerment can be seen as a thorough transformation in the mechanisms that elevate women's standing in society, aided and encouraged by both the government and society. This involves emphasizing the significance of politics and collaborative efforts to empower women to establish their own agendas and objectives, thereby enhancing their capacity to take charge of their lives (Rahman, 2013, pp. 10-11).

Another definition of women's empowerment involves a process whereby women gain the capacity to unite and enhance their self-sufficiency, asserting their inherent right to make decisions and manage resources independently. This process aids in breaking free from dependency (Malhotra, et al., 2002).

Building upon the previous discussions, women's empowerment can be procedurally defined as a range of power manifestations that enable women to have complete autonomy to live their lives as human beings, enjoying all the rights afforded by laws, procedures, and objective conditions that enable them to develop skills across various domains. Whether political, economic, cultural, social, or scientific, these skills allow women to cultivate a strong identity with full confidence, capabilities, and potential. This enables them to apply these skills effectively, contributing to their personal development and future progress while enhancing

their role in society. Importantly, this advancement should not clash with societal privacy, customs, or traditions but rather aim for societal advancement and stability (adapted from [Abu Hamdan, 2014](#)).

## 2.4. Legal Empowerment

Legal empowerment, as defined by Gloub, is a comprehensive and multi-faceted concept that encompasses various strategies rather than a singular solution. It should not be viewed as a cure-all for poverty. Instead, legal empowerment refers to utilizing the law to improve the circumstances of those who are disadvantaged and marginalized ([Glub, 2000, p. 6](#)). Some organizations view legal empowerment through a layered approach, as described by the *Asian Development Bank*. According to this perspective, there are three layers: The initial layer involves recognizing rights as the foundation of empowerment. The second layer entails individuals and groups acquiring knowledge of tactics to engage with both formal and informal mechanisms for resolving disputes and engaging with executive agencies that safeguard their rights. The final layer involves developing confidence and the capacity to assert those rights ([Stevens, 2009, pp. 132-137](#)).

Taking this into consideration, we can start by defining a procedural approach to legal empowerment, which involves efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women across various domains. This includes establishing a range of mechanisms that provide them with the practical and academic capacity to take on legal and leadership roles. This is achieved by devising a well-defined strategy with distinct objectives, utilizing various legal frameworks such as international law through treaties and agreements, as well as domestic laws such as constitutional provisions or legislation passed by the country's legislative body (adapted from [Abu Hamdan, 2014](#)).

## 3. Research Methodology and Procedures

### 3.1. Type of Research

This research falls under the category of analytical descriptive studies, which seek to identify the characteristics of a specific

phenomenon and examine the surrounding circumstances. The objective is to uncover relevant facts pertaining to this phenomenon or specific groups, with the aim of providing a comprehensive description that covers all aspects. The study aims to highlight the various dimensions of the phenomenon, focusing on identifying social barriers to the legal empowerment of women in Port Said Governorate, particularly within family dynamics and workplace environments.

### 3.2. Research Methodology

The research utilized the social sample survey method, which aims to investigate the phenomenon both quantitatively and qualitatively by analyzing its various dimensions and relationships. This method is fundamental in social research as it allows for the description and depiction of the phenomenon being studied through the collection of standardized information, its classification, analysis, and thorough examination.

The significance of the social survey in social studies is outlined as follows:

1. It provides insight into social reality within a specific timeframe.
2. It gathers diverse data on the social phenomenon in an organized manner.
3. When the community being studied is small, the survey aims to cover all its aspects.
4. The method relies on statistical techniques, scaled questionnaires, and structured interviews ([Mustafa Omar, 2001, p. 75](#); [United Nations, 1984, p. 138](#)).

### 3.3. Data Collection Tools

In this study, a data collection tool was employed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, which were integrated to fulfill the primary objective of the field study. The main instrument used for obtaining information from respondents is referred to as a "measurement questionnaire." This questionnaire is utilized to gather responses from participants, combining both types of data to achieve the study's intended outcomes.

Drawing from the insights gained during the study, the researcher successfully tailored and

customized the data collection tools to suit the study's context. The researcher utilized a scale form, dividing it into several axes as follows:

1. Examining the perspective of the research sample on the actuality of legal empowerment.
2. Assessing the research sample's familiarity with international agreements safeguarding women's rights.
3. Identifying social barriers hindering women's legal empowerment.
4. Presenting recommendations for legal empowerment initiatives for women.

### 3.4. Fields of Study

The study's fields of investigation are categorized as follows:

1. **Geographic Scope:** The city of Port Said was selected for its significance as the researcher's place of residence and work. This choice enabled the researcher to closely and naturally monitor cases.
2. **Sampling Population:** The study sample consisted of 100 individuals, specifically women from Port Said city. This sample was intentionally selected using a snowball sampling method, starting with three initial cases and expanding to 100 cases through referrals from friends, acquaintances, and informants. This sample was chosen based on availability.
3. **Time Frame:** This refers to the period during which the field study took place. Data collection for this research occurred between February and August 2023.

The study period was divided into three stages as outlined below:

1. **Desk Review Stage:** This phase is referred to as the theoretical preparation stage for the study.
2. **Field Study Stage:** Also known as the stage of organizing and conducting fieldwork.
3. **Final Report Writing Stage:** This involves compiling the results, recommendations, and research topics raised during the study.

### 3.5. Method of Analysis and Interpretation

The study primarily employed the qualitative

analysis method, which was interpreted based on the study's objectives, inquiries, theoretical framework, and findings from prior research.

## 4. Theoretical Trends Explaining the Research Topic

### 4.1. Constructivist-Functionalist Trend

The constructivist-functionalist trend stands out as a significant classical trend in sociology and anthropology. It revolves around theories that seek to elucidate human behavior and its interactions within the social and cultural framework. The roots of this trend trace back to the French scholar Emile Durkheim, recognized as a key figure in the development of functionalist constructivist theory (Smith- Seymour, 1998, p. 739).

The research concentrated on this trend due to its relevance in comprehending the development of a woman's personality and her upbringing within the societal role assigned to her, especially by the family and broader society. Scholars of this trend, beginning with "Emile Durkheim," delved into various topics, with a notable focus on matters such as structural integration and collective conscience. The researcher will explore these issues in the following sections.

#### 4.1.1. Issue of Structural Integration

The concept of integration is rooted in the notion of biological integration. Emile Durkheim distinguished between two forms of integration: primary solidarity observed in primitive societies, and organic solidarity seen in industrial societies. Solidarity, according to Durkheim, is achieved through the concept of division of labor. It focuses on the role being performed rather than the individual, as a person may fulfill multiple roles simultaneously (Parsons, 1960, p. 125).

Advocates of this trend argue that men and women are equal but possess distinct specializations: men typically work outside the home, while women manage household responsibilities. This differentiation, they argue, does not constitute discrimination. When the family functions as a cohesive social unit, it can contribute to societal cohesion and harmony. According to Talcott Parsons, this division of labor corresponds to what he termed

"instrumental roles" for men (work outside the home) and "expressive roles" for women (household care) (Marshall, 2001, p. 460).

Considering the investigation into social obstacles to the legal empowerment of women, this perspective underscores the importance of exploring Emile Durkheim's approach, which faced significant opposition in modern times. The opposition to this viewpoint includes the following points:

- A. The concept of integration is viewed as a manipulative tactic that grants men greater authority over women, stripping them of their societal rights.
- B. Critics argue that this trend deprives women of their social rights by limiting their focus to themselves and the family sphere.
- C. Despite advocating for change, this trend is perceived as promoting stability, which contradicts the notion of progress and development (Berany et al., 1992, p. 297).

Despite the significant criticism directed towards this trend, the study paid close attention to it. Even as women enter the workforce, society continues to expect them to bear the responsibility of caring for the family at home. Consequently, the researcher aims to identify the social barriers hindering women's legal empowerment in the context of societal shifts. This investigation seeks to identify and overcome these obstacles to demonstrate the potential for successful empowerment.

#### 4.1.2. Issue of Collective Conscience

The functional theory revolves around the socialization process of children within the family, where the collective conscience's functionality is encapsulated in the family's role in socialization. Parsons considers this aspect as crucial for maintaining social order in his theory. The origins of this concept can be traced back to Emile Durkheim and other anthropologists. According to Parsons, behavior is guided by internal values that contribute to the formation of a moral system (Timashev, 1985, p. 362).

Parsons emphasized the significance of individuals learning their roles and societal values from their parents within the family. This is

achieved through a series of methods:

- A. The importance of the child internalizing the mother's values through identification, with Parsons drawing on Freud's ideas to illustrate the mother's role in social control and imparting societal values.
- B. Using positive reinforcement to encourage desired behavior and negative reinforcement to discourage undesired behavior, reflecting the influence of the behavioral school in this approach.

In this context, Parsons emphasized the significance of socialization in passing down society's values from one generation to the next, aiming to establish equilibrium within the societal framework (Chalabi, 1995, pp. 201-202).

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that the current study could greatly benefit from this trend. This is because it helps in identifying the social barriers that families encounter, leading to an imbalance in the roles of women and hindering their legal empowerment.

Moreover, this trend aligns with the study's objectives. Therefore, the study adopted this trend as its theoretical framework for analyzing society. According to this perspective, society functions through a series of systems, each fulfilling specific roles to uphold stability and equilibrium. In this context, the law is viewed as a system of regulations governing social interactions while also being influenced by the social context within which laws are formulated (Taha, 2016).

Advocates of this trend argue that the primary catalyst for significant changes rests on the state's role. This is because the state possesses authority over legislative bodies and controls the legal system, enabling it to bring about social change. Without state involvement, laws cannot be put into practice. When the state utilizes the legal framework, it aims to restore equilibrium within society. The study of law from this functional perspective provides insights into the relationship between law and society, the influence of societal changes on legislative processes, and the adaptation of laws to societal conditions.

#### 4.2. The Social Role

The social role is a complex social concept in



sociology, and one of its most important pioneers is George Herbert Mead. Mead's ideas rely on two fundamental concepts:

- **Social Status:** An individual's social role is their designated place within a particular social structure, which entails specific obligations tied to corresponding rights and privileges.
- **Social Role:** A social role is a collection of actions carried out by an individual within the context of the group they belong to (Al-Dalaeen, 2020, p. 40-41). Alternatively, it can be described as the expected behavior of an individual in a particular position. Each role comes with a unique set of demands and traits, influenced and shaped by customs and traditions in some instances, and by the individual occupying that specific position in others.

The concept of the social role encompasses several sub-definitions:

1. **Normative Role:** This refers to the specific specifications and requirements that stem from a particular society or culture. These specifications define the various roles and social positions of individuals.
2. **Expected Role:** This involves the set of specifications or characteristics that an individual acquires from others and vice versa during interaction. These interactions are influenced by the respective cultures of those involved.
3. **Functional Role:** This is the actual role that aligns with either the general culture, subculture, or group role. It may also align with the normative role, while the expected role may not entirely correspond with either, varying in degrees of alignment (Al-Saati, 2006, pp. 105-106).

The role is viewed as the basic unit distinct from individual behavioral events within the social framework. These roles are then categorized and structured. Each individual performs various roles within a single social interaction, contributing to the cohesion of individuals within the social framework. The social structure is influenced by a range of factors such as values, life objectives, an individual's

self-perception, childhood experiences, educational background, and personal experiences. These elements collectively shape an individual's awareness of their role (Fahmy, 2003, pp. 24-25).

Role theory examines gender disparities, focusing on the distinctions between biological sex and gender within the realm of communication. It operates on the premise that men and women inhabit separate worlds, based on the belief that fundamental differences exist between them. This is largely due to the notion that sex is a more straightforward characteristic for categorizing individuals compared to race.

According to role theory, gender is determined by genetics and biological factors, comprising a set of widely accepted beliefs regarding the traits of women and men. In all societies, specific behaviors are designated for each gender based on these beliefs. Women's roles are often centered around domestic duties, while men are expected to work outside the home under the notion that "men are the protectors of women." This contrasts with Western societies, even when the behaviors of women and men deviate from these established norms. This deviation can lead to a sense of estrangement, as the expected characteristics have been deviated from (Diaantin & Zeli, 2015, p. 79).

### 4.3. The Feminist Trend

It is important to acknowledge that numerous feminist theories have been developed to explore the many inequalities between men and women in societies, particularly focusing on the status of women in Western societies. Notably, a majority of these theories have originated in the Western world since the onset of industrialization up to the present day. Originally, the term feminism encompassed those advocating for women's suffrage, as well as those advocating for women's participation in elections, access to education, and entry into various professions (Scott & Marshall, 2011, p. 371).

The feminist movement emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as women became increasingly self-aware and began to confront the long-standing injustices they faced. Various voices advocating for equality, freedom, and the elimination of

discrimination in all forms began to emerge. However, substantial changes in these patterns did not occur until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the movement gained momentum. Feminism started to coalesce and organize systematically around a clear vision, leading to the term "feminism" being coined. This movement aims to rectify and elevate the low status of women, challenging male dominance and the cultural biases that have permeated societal structures (Al-Qurashi, 2008, p. 25).

The concept of feminism sparked a revolution against the dominance of the male perspective, as highlighted by Yumna Al-Khouly, a pioneering figure in Arab feminist thought. She described feminism as any theoretical or practical effort aimed at reevaluating, questioning, and critiquing the prevailing social structures that have positioned men at the center. This system places women in a subordinate position, imposing restrictions that hinder their growth and contributions simply because of their gender. It diminishes their experiences and attributes solely because they are feminine. As a result, civilization across all its realms is often portrayed as a male achievement, reinforcing male authority while subordinating and marginalizing women (Al-Kholy, 2004, p. 11).

Throughout the historical progression of feminist theory, it has undergone various movements known as "feminist waves," consisting of two primary waves that led to the emergence of a third wave known as post-feminism (Ali, 2001, p. 11).

The first wave of feminism, spanning from 1880 to 1920, was primarily focused on securing women's full equality with men in terms of rights and citizenship, including legislative advancements. However, the roots of this wave can be traced back even further, to the period between the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, which marked an early stage of women's rights advocacy. The emergence of Mary Wollstonecraft and her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" signaled the beginning of this wave. The primary objective of the first wave was to advocate for legislative changes that would grant women rights to education, suffrage, employment, marriage and divorce rights,

property ownership, and overall gender equality. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women's movements were gaining momentum towards achieving the right to vote. The belief that suffrage was the cornerstone of women's full equality in rights and citizenship became a central focus of legislative efforts (Al-Omda, 2016, pp. 36-37).

The second wave of feminism, spanning from the 1960s to the end of the twentieth century, was characterized by a critical examination of societal norms. It moved beyond the call for mere equality and saw the emergence of various trends and movements advocating for freedom from political, social, and sexual oppression. This wave gained significant momentum, particularly with the influence of Betty Friedan, an American writer and feminist activist. In her 1963 book "The Feminine Mystique," Friedan emphasized the need to reshape cultural perceptions of femininity to enable women to achieve higher levels of maturity, fulfillment, and self-realization (Jazrawi, 2018, p. 65-66).

Radical feminists, in their rejection of patriarchal authority, introduced a new theoretical model in the 1980s known as the "Gender approach." This model aims to examine masculinity and femininity as opposing categories with unequal values, emphasizing how behavior and roles convey meaning. The Gender approach focuses on understanding how social structures differ and how labor is distributed within these structures (Ali, 2001, pp. 41-42).

Feminist theory has been dedicated to empowering women politically, economically, and socially. Empowerment encompasses a range of actions aimed at:

1. Closing the gap between men and women in various spheres of life.
2. Broadening opportunities for women in education, economics, employment, and legal and labor rights.
3. Eliminating barriers that hinder women's empowerment, including those related to health.
4. Ensuring equality in decision-making processes and various life activities.

5. Developing mechanisms and strategies to integrate women into economic growth, fostering their independence and enhancing human dignity (Radwan, 2007, pp. 143-150).

In the context of the two waves initiated by feminist theory, the concept of post-feminist theory comes into play. Post-feminist theory emerged in the 1980s to examine the anti-feminist backlash and describe the opposition to the second wave of the feminist movement. Proponents of post-feminist theory suggest that feminism is no longer relevant in contemporary society. Amelia Hohns notes that post-feminist writings emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to portray the second wave of feminism as an autonomous and cohesive entity. However, these writings have faced criticism (Jones, 1994, p. 20).

The term post-feminism is often used to describe young women who acknowledge the gains made by the women's movement, such as access to jobs, education, and fulfilling family lives. However, these women may not actively pursue their rights in legal contexts. The concept of post-feminism has sparked significant debate, with some arguing that the equality feminism advocates for is unattainable, leading post-feminists to explore alternative directions (Aronson, 2003, p. 226).

Post-feminist theory advocates for equality in two main ways:

- The first approach aims to eliminate the distinction between masculinity and femininity, suggesting that both men and women should be free from sexual categorization. This allows women to receive the same treatment as men, without being limited by societal norms that differentiate between them.
- The second approach seeks to maintain the diversity of individual identities, honoring the unique characteristics of both genders. It emphasizes granting each individual the freedom to navigate within their own sphere of privacy. Laws are proposed to define the boundaries within which women interact with men, preserving the privacy of both genders and promoting integration in their activities (Hassan, 2021, p. 221).

According to this theory, it is evident that

Egyptian society demonstrates a level of intellectual openness regarding the pursuit of equality between men and women. This openness is reflected in the laws and legislation that actively promote more effective gender equality to contribute towards societal development. The state's initiatives to empower women are evident in various strategic areas, such as the National Empowerment of Women 2030 program. This program is part of the state's efforts to prepare women for participation in political life and leadership roles, aligning with broader societal development goals (Hassan, 2021, p. 221).

## 5. Previous Studies

### 5.1. Studies That Dealt with Women's Empowerment

Intisar Saleh Al-Halabi conducted a study in 2020 titled "Empowering Saudi Women in Light of the Kingdom's Vision 2030." The study aimed to highlight women's role in driving development and enhancing their awareness on psychological, social, and economic levels, enabling them to safeguard themselves and confidently engage in dialogue and discussions. The study included valuable recommendations to assist women in refining their skills and acquiring the necessary capabilities for stability. It also emphasized the importance of women sharing equal opportunities with men in employment and recognizing their status (Al-Halabi, 2020).

The study employed both a descriptive and analytical approach, leading to several key findings. It revealed statistically significant differences in the average scores of the sample participants regarding women's empowerment across the study variables. Additionally, significant differences were found in family stability based on the study variables. The study also identified a correlation between the Women's Empowerment Questionnaire and the Family Stability Questionnaire, as well as correlations between the Women's Empowerment Questionnaire and the study variables. Moreover, it highlighted variances in the participation rates of factors influencing women's empowerment and family stability (Al-Halabi, 2020).

Iman Ali Maabad Al-Zuhri conducted a study in 2020 titled "Women's Empowerment Policies

in Egypt and the Role of the National Council for Women from 2000 to 2016." The study aimed to explore and analyze the relationship between various variables, employing a constructivist-functional approach with a purposive representative sample. Data was collected through interviews based on specific characteristics and conditions.

The study revealed Egypt's policies on women's empowerment across political, economic, and social spheres. It found that women's empowerment varied based on the supporting policies during different circumstances and periods in Egypt. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the National Council for Women's effectiveness in empowerment policies was closely tied to its economic capabilities. It also highlighted that when the political system remained neutral and prioritized women's issues, there was greater attention given to women's institutions (Al-Zuhri, 2020).

Jihad Mahmoud Saber Al-Ghannam presented a study in 2020 titled "Official Efforts to Empower Egyptian Women, the National Council for Women as a Model." The study aimed to explore the role of the National Council for Women in empowering Egyptian women and assess the effectiveness of this role. The study posed several questions, including inquiries into the global context that necessitated the establishment of the National Council for Women, the key mechanisms used by the Council to achieve its objectives, and its role in political, economic, cultural, and legal empowerment of women. Additionally, the study aimed to evaluate the extent to which the National Council for Women has contributed to achieving the desired empowerment.

The study was grounded in feminist theory, advocating for equality between men and women across all political, economic, cultural, and legal realms. It utilized interview guides with journalists specializing in women's rights. The study yielded results confirming the National Council for Women's effectiveness in achieving legal empowerment for women. The Council played a pivotal role in proposing, enacting, and amending laws to safeguard women's rights and prevent discrimination across various sectors.

However, the study also highlighted that the programs and activities of the National Council for Women were less effective in achieving comprehensive empowerment. Furthermore, the Council's engagement in numerous projects across the country led to a dispersion of efforts and challenges in monitoring a large number of initiatives. Lastly, the study concluded that while the Women's Breadwinner Project achieved economic empowerment, social, political, and legal empowerment remained unmet (Al-Ghannam, 2020).

## 5.2. Studies Related to Legal Empowerment of Women

Aisha Bourgda conducted a study in 2015 on "the legal and political empowerment of women," aiming to explore the various dimensions of women's empowerment. The study focused on six main axes. The first axis delved into the concept of empowerment, emphasizing the provision of cultural, educational, and material resources for individuals to participate in decision-making processes and control resources. This aims to eliminate dependencies on women and empower them socially, economically, and politically. The second axis examined levels of empowerment at the individual, collective, and societal levels. The third axis focused on measuring indicators of women's empowerment, including their participation in leadership positions, committees, and public roles. It also looked into providing non-traditional educational opportunities for women. The fourth axis traced the evolution of the concept of empowerment through the lenses of development, women's development, and gender and development. The fifth axis explored women's empowerment in legislation, considering international agreements and the national legal framework. The sixth axis centered on the reality of political empowerment for women, including their representation in parliament, involvement in political parties, and participation in presidential elections (Bourgda, 2015).

The study reached the conclusion that legal and political empowerment plays a pivotal role in integrating women into the development process. It is a crucial element in any strategy aimed at



fostering the participation of both genders in public life. The findings highlighted that legal empowerment focuses on providing access to resources such as education and employment, based on individual competence rather than gender or race. Additionally, political empowerment has been instrumental in enhancing women's involvement in political affairs, leading to increased representation of women in parliament, government, and political parties.

Maryam Muhammad Othman conducted a study in 2016 titled "The Reflection of the Legal Empowerment of Jordanian Women on Their Political Participation." The study aimed to examine women's access to decision-making and policy-making roles within parliamentary institutions and state policy-making. It utilized the United Nations Development Program's framework for Empowering Women to assess women's political participation, particularly focusing on their representation in Parliament (Othman, 2016).

The study employed a social survey approach, focusing on a sample of women leaders actively engaged in women's political activities. Participants were selected based on criteria such as educational background, marital status, monthly income, involvement in political parties and charitable organizations, and participation in political work. The study yielded several findings, including the correlation between women's political participation and various societal factors and variables. It also examined the societal readiness for political participation and the level of political support it receives. Moreover, the study observed an improvement in the political status of women in the Kingdom, attributed to the implementation of legal procedures and amendments to the Personal Status Law (Othman, 2016).

The study revealed an increase in the percentage of women actively participating in electoral voting. It also indicated that the women's quota system, a law that has significantly contributed to providing women with a tangible representation in Parliament, resulted in an actual allocation of 6 seats for women. The statistical analysis of the study's findings showed that

8.60% of the sample believed that there is genuine equality between men and women, while 2.44% of the sample acknowledged the positive impact of the media on women's political participation.

The study highlighted that the primary reason for the increase in men's participation in elections is often attributed to the perception of men being physically stronger. It also brought to light the prevalence of certain customs and traditions within Jordanian society that hinder women's political participation. The study confirmed that a major obstacle is the lack of financial stability and the correlation of women's income with that of men. Additionally, it pointed out the failure of existing laws and regulations to actively promote women's access to leadership positions. Furthermore, the study revealed statistically significant differences in societal attitudes towards women's political participation, particularly noting the positive impact of higher levels of education (Othman, 2016).

In a study titled "Barriers to Empowering Arab Women with their Legal Rights in the Republic of Yemen," Iman Omar Al-Lahmdi aimed to address factors that could enhance women's involvement in social, cultural, and economic spheres. This effort seeks to achieve gender equality by recognizing women as individuals and citizens with legal, economic, scientific, cultural, and political rights and freedoms.

This study sheds light on the enduring cultural legacy that has historically deprived women of certain rights and poses challenges in implementing laws. The study aims to explore the concept of empowerment, laws, rights, and legal protections for Yemeni women, along with the obstacles they encounter. These factors significantly impact women's ability to achieve empowerment in their social, political, economic, and cultural rights.

The study utilized the descriptive analytical method along with a social survey sample. The findings revealed several key results: a significant gap between the implementation of laws and their application in practice, limited support from the state to enhance women's participation in public roles, and existing legal, social, political, economic, and cultural conditions that hinder

women's engagement. Furthermore, the study identified obstacles to women's political participation, including a lack of awareness among women regarding laws and regulations that pertain to them, as well as a general societal lack of awareness regarding the importance of women's involvement in politics.

**6. Field Study**

The researcher endeavors to establish a methodological framework for executing the field study. The study unfolded in various stages, commencing with the design phase, progressing through implementation, culminating in analysis, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. One of the methodological steps involved in the study was ensuring the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, which was addressed as follows:

**\* A Scale Form to Measure Social Obstacles to Women’s Legal Empowerment in Port Said Governorate (Prepared by The Researcher)**

**6.1. Validity of the Form**

**A- Honesty of Reviewers:**

The researcher initially presented the form to a panel of sociology faculty members specialized in the field. The purpose was to assess the appropriateness of the statements for each of the four axes contained in the form.

- Axis 1: The perspective of the research sample on the actuality of legal

empowerment.

- Axis 2: The familiarity of the research sample with international agreements safeguarding women's rights.
- Axis 3: Societal barriers hindering women's legal empowerment.
- Axis 4: Suggestions for enhancing women's legal empowerment.

The suggested revisions were presented to the reviewers, which involved deleting, modifying, adding, and rephrasing certain phrases. The agreement percentages among the reviewers regarding the validity of these phrases ranged from 83% to 100%. As a result, the form now contained 38 phrases distributed among the questionnaire's axes.

**B- Internal Consistency:**

The reviewers' honesty represents a form of superficial or surface-level honesty. Consequently, the researcher administered the form to a survey sample of 35 women in Port Said Governorate. The aim was to assess internal consistency by computing correlation coefficients between the score of each statement and the overall score of the axis. This analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The correlation coefficient values are presented in [Table 1](#) below:

**Table 1.** The Correlation Evaluation Coefficients of the Questionnaire Statements with the Total Score of the Axis

| No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1               | 0.719**                       | 11              | 0.765**                       | 21              | 0.722**                       | 31              | 0.240*                        |
| 2               | 0.780**                       | 12              | 0.736**                       | 22              | 0.710**                       | 32              | 0.735**                       |
| 3               | 0.715**                       | 13              | 0.286*                        | 23              | 0.239*                        | 33              | 0.766**                       |
| 4               | 0.725**                       | 14              | 0.765**                       | 24              | 0.716**                       | 34              | 0.743**                       |
| 5               | 0.725**                       | 15              | 0.721**                       | 25              | 0.208*                        | 35              | 0.767**                       |
| 6               | 0.786**                       | 16              | 0.724**                       | 26              | 0.751**                       | 36              | 0.221*                        |
| 7               | 0.280*                        | 17              | 0.787**                       | 27              | 0.780**                       | 37              | 0.774**                       |
| 8               | 0.411*                        | 18              | 0.765**                       | 28              | 0.755**                       | 38              | 0.727**                       |
| 9               | 0.744**                       | 19              | 0.735**                       | 29              | 0.225*                        | -               | -                             |
| 10              | 0.712**                       | 20              | 0.711**                       | 30              | 0.743**                       | -               | -                             |

(\*) Signified at level 0.05.

(\*\*) Signified at level 0.01.

The table demonstrates that the correlation coefficients of the statements with the questionnaire axes are statistically significant at the 0.01 level for some, and at the 0.05 level for others. This indicates a consistency between the statements in the form and its axes. Therefore, the form exhibits an acceptable level of consistency.

## 6.2. The Stability of the Form

### A- Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Method

**Table 2.** The Valuation of Alpha Coefficients for the Form Statements

| No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value | No. of Sentence | Correlation coefficient value |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1               | 0.841                         | 11              | 0.846                         | 21              | 0.842                         | 31              | 0.842                         |
| 2               | 0.844                         | 12              | 0.846                         | 22              | 0.843                         | 32              | 0.845                         |
| 3               | 0.845                         | 13              | 0.845                         | 23              | 0.846                         | 33              | 0.846                         |
| 4               | 0.842                         | 14              | 0.845                         | 24              | 0.847                         | 34              | 0.844                         |
| 5               | 0.846                         | 15              | 0.846                         | 25              | 0.845                         | 35              | 0.845                         |
| 6               | 0.845                         | 16              | 0.844                         | 26              | 0.845                         | 36              | 0.843                         |
| 7               | 0.844                         | 17              | 0.845                         | 27              | 0.843                         | 37              | 0.844                         |
| 8               | 0.841                         | 18              | 0.843                         | 28              | 0.844                         | 38              | 0.843                         |
| 9               | 0.841                         | 19              | 0.844                         | 29              | 0.844                         | -               | -                             |
| 10              | 0.841                         | 20              | 0.845                         | 30              | 0.841                         | -               | -                             |

The table illustrates that all the reliability coefficient values of the statements are lower than the reliability coefficient of the entire questionnaire. This suggests that the questionnaire statements possess an acceptable level of stability.

### B - Half Split Method

To assess the overall reliability of the questionnaire, the split-half method was employed. The correlation coefficient between the two halves of the questionnaire was found to be 0.808. After adjusting for the splitting effect using the Spearman-Brown equation, the reliability coefficient reached 0.894. This indicates that the form demonstrates an acceptable level of reliability.

Following the validity and reliability procedures, the questionnaire now consists of 38 statements distributed among its axes as outlined below:

- Axis 1: The reality of legal empowerment from the perspective of the research sample, encompassing phrases 1 to 9.

For assessing the questionnaire's reliability, the researcher employed Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. This was done by systematically removing each statement score from the total questionnaire score. The overall alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire was found to be 0.848. Additionally, the reliability coefficient for each statement was calculated, with the values presented in Table 2 below:

- Axis 2: The research sample's awareness of international agreements defending women's rights, covering phrases 10 to 18.
- Axis 3: Social obstacles hindering women's legal empowerment, including phrases 19 to 28.
- Axis 4: Proposals to enhance women's legal empowerment, comprising phrases 29 to 38. This revised form is now valid for application to the primary research sample.

## 7. Results

The study commenced with an effort to identify societal barriers impeding the legal empowerment of Egyptian women in Port Said Governorate, aiming to address and overcome these obstacles. Following the field application, several key results were obtained, the most significant of which are:

1. Understanding and analyzing women's legal involvement is intricately linked to understanding the dynamics of the legal community and leadership processes within Egyptian society. A grasp of the community

and legal landscape aids in comprehending women's legal participation and their fundamental rights as vital elements within society. This underscores the necessity of ensuring women's legal involvement in society at large.

2. Women's legal participation is associated with a range of variables and factors intertwined with society, including the readiness of the community for women's legal engagement and the intellectual preparedness of society to embrace such participation.
3. Observers of women's history in legal endeavors can discern a progression in women's legal status within Egyptian society. This evolution is evident through a series of legal measures implemented by the state, such as amendments to the Personal Status Law, enabling women to engage in the legal process.
4. The inadequate legal empowerment of women and their limited awareness of their fundamental legal rights stem from the limited role of the media in highlighting and publicizing key agreements, seminars, and conferences pertaining to women's rights.
5. The researcher noted a tangible advancement in women's legal participation and their assumption of leadership roles, yet their actual legal involvement remains comparatively weaker than that of men.

## 8. Recommendations

1. Efforts to transform societal perceptions of women, including awareness campaigns conducted by diverse women's organizations and media outlets, aimed at enlightening the public about the significance of women's involvement in decision-making roles.
2. Establishing a coherent strategy to bolster support for women in leadership positions, highlighting their accomplishments and contributions across various fields.
3. Amplifying the role of impactful women's organizations advocating for a democratic resolution to women's issues, while educating women about their inherent rights bestowed by divinity and recognized universally.

4. Initiatives to enhance academic curricula by incorporating courses on legal literacy, human rights, and responsibilities.
5. Monitoring the enactment and enforcement of legislation pertaining to women's rights to ensure practical implementation.
6. Engaging with all sectors of society, including family and educational institutions (schools, universities), to promote gender equality and empower women.

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