

Attitudes of University Students toward Arab Women Human Security: Executive Synopsis

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The Empirical Puzzle

Though women issues have been on the agenda of most Arab governments for the past decade, it is not clear how supportive the masses are of women rights. In this paper one examines the attitudes of a group of the most significant sects of Arab population towards the various dimensions of Arab Women human security.

Data Collection:

A. Sample: A non-probability quota-sample of 5680 students from 12 Arab countries has been used to run an exploratory survey of these students' attitudes. Roughly each country is represented by 450 students from government, private and foreign universities (if available). If a country does not have a foreign university, the foreign university has been replaced with a private and/or government university.

To diversify the sample, the researchers targeted students with different academic majors and fields (natural science, medical

sciences, humanities and so on) and different undergraduate academic years (freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors).

B. Training of researchers: Two researchers from each of the 12 Arab countries along with one researcher from Palestine attended an extensive workshop on empirical methods including data collections and data analysis techniques using STATA software. The workshop took place in Abu Dhabi Dec. 2007 under the auspices of H.H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak AWO president. Upon finishing the necessary training, the researchers reviewed some writings on human security and embarked on drafting a preliminary survey to gauge the attitudes of Arab university students toward women rights from a human security perspective. The main researcher re-organized and edited the survey for clarity and consistency, resent it to the researchers to solicit more ideas and suggestions. When done, the survey was pre-tested for reliability (no tendentious or offensive questions & the like) by the researchers.

C. Approving and administering the survey: The AWO member states have been involved in the process by reviewing, commenting and deciding the questions and universities where the survey to be administered. During the months from April through June 2008, the sample target students were approached. The researchers have been trained to

answer questions and clarify obscure terms, if any, without leading the respondents into a specific direction.

D. Codifying responses and entering data: To standardize the process of data codification and entry, the main researcher has prepared a standard spreadsheet with a common codification index that all researchers have used. Finishing the process of data entry, each researcher has sent the written surveys to the AWO headquarter in Cairo and the final detailed report along with preliminary regression models to the main researcher.

Data Analysis

Determining the variables:

A. Dependent variables: Given the multidimensional nature of the concept of human security, the survey has been designed to include several questions related to the legal, military, political, economic, familial, and educational dimensions of the Arab women human security. Since these questions have been speculative and theory-driven, factor analysis (with varimax rotation) has been utilized to ascertain that the respondents' answers (i.e. the data) match the expectations of the researchers when they framed the questions. Factor analysis suggests two or more questions to measure each of the mentioned dimensions. Before

constructing the indexes variables, Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency and reliability has been used to verify the factor analysis suggestions. A 0.75 cut-off has been used to eliminate the questions that have been scoring low on the suggested indices. One additional index has been constructed to gauge how university students evaluate the (lack of) discrimination against women in their respective societies. An example of the index of attitudes of Arab university students regarding the economic dimension of Arab women human security is built on the additive outcome of the following three questions:
Q # 28: (Agree/disagree 5 point scale) on women's right to work.
Q# 36: (Agree/disagree 5 point scale) on woman's right to decide for herself how to spend her salary.
Q# 38 (Agree/disagree 5 point scale) on women's right to work should not be conditioned by her family's need of money.

B. Independent variables

Initially fifteen independent variables have been suggested by the literature and researchers' observations to be the most likely causes for the variation in students' attitudes toward Arab women human security issues. These proposed independent variables include demographic questions such as gender and

age; socio-economic questions such as income and urban, rural, and nomadic origin questions; religious questions such as religion, commitment to prayer and listening to or watching religious shows; source-of-ideas-questions such as most trustworthy TV, radio and written media outlets; the most trusted religious scholars and preaches; questions about their own educational experiences such as the type of university (governmental, private or foreign), their academic departments and so on. These independent variables have been hypothesized to have an effect of some sort on students' attitudes toward Arab women human security. What kind of effect (positive or negative) and towards which of the six proposed dimensions do these hypothesized variables have? To answer this question, several ordered logit regression models have been run. The following table shows the major results of these models.

Findings:

In the following table, there is a summary of the statistically significant variables that have an impact on students' attitudes toward Arab women human security. To make a long story clear and short, the last column, *variables order*, reflects the relative importance of the independent variables. As stated, in this column, being female is the variable that has the most explanatory power among all the hypothesized variables,

indicating that women are the most defenders of their own rights. The role of independent preachers and scholars sympathetic to women's rights come second; which corresponds to the generally accepted notion that mosques are the most influential agents of socialization among most Arabs. The number of years spent in college/university or the number of credit hours taken come as the third most influential factor that positively shape students' attitudes towards Arab women human security. Simply put, education in general matters in a positive way.

The fourth most influential factor is the foreign Arab TV stations (such as BBC, French channels). Students who choose these channels to be their most trustworthy source of news and ideas, have been more supportive of Arab women human security.

The fifth most influential factor in shaping the mindsets of the surveyed students has been the nature of their major or areas of study. Students of humanities and social sciences show more support to Arab women human security compared to students of hard sciences or mathematics; a non-surprising result.

The sixth most influential variable has been the foreign education (such as American universities in Cairo and Beirut) in contrast with private and governmental universities. Students of foreign universities have shown more support toward Arab

women human security than their peers in private and governmental universities.

The seventh most influential variable has been the level of satisfaction with one's family income. The more students show satisfaction with their income, the more they are supportive of Arab women human security.

The eighth most influential variable among the hypothesized variables is trusting the non-local Arab TV stations (such as Al-Jazeera, al-Arabia and the like). Students who trust these TV stations tend to be more supportive of Arab women human security. The ninth most influential variable is trusting the government-appointed scholars and preachers. Age comes as the last most influential variable. Older students tend to have more supportive views of Arab women human security.

Ordered Logit Regression Results

Variables order	Educ. security	Familial security	Econ. security	Political security	Military security	Legal security	Status quo Assessment	Depend. Variables / Indep. Var.
	%78	%58	%53	%51	%23	%59	%48	Approving (%)
A. Demographic and socio-economic variables								
10	0.13*** (0.062)	0.052** (0.02)	.018 (.014)	.013*** (.004)	0.11 (.106)	0.32 (.242)	-.032 (.026)	Age (17-22) -1
1	0.21*** (.041)	0.43*** (0.032)	.66*** (.109)	.136*** (.016)	0.249** (.129)	.342*** (.082)	0.14*** (.046)	Female students -2 (48%)

Variables order	Educ. security	Familial security	Econ. security	Political security	Military security	Legal security	Status quo Assessment	Depend. Variables
								Indep. Var.
3	.159*** (.068)	202** (.113)	.073 (.096)	0.403* 1.55	.422 (.119)	0.035 (0.041)	0.11** (.046)	Number of years or -3 credit hours
7	0.32** (0.15)	0.096** (.045)	.031* (.018)	0.16* (.094)	.126 (.016)	.057*** (.004)	0.089** (0.042)	Income satisfaction -4
B. <u>Trusted sources of news and ideas</u>								
	-.013 (.029)	-.121 (.219)	.169 (.101)	-.093 (.14)	.164 (.361)	.201 (.192)	-.175 (.162)	Trusting gov. owned -1 (%23) newspapers
	-.028 (.067)	.078 (.059)	-.003 (.059)	.115 (.162)	-.197 (.102)	.096* (.047)	.035 (.061)	Trusting independent -2 newspapers (if (%46) available)
	.324 (.222)	.161 (.151)	0.034 (.057)	.052 (.049)	-.302 (.189)	.023 (.027)	0.082 (0.56)	Trusting non-local -3 (%31) Arab newspapers
	.082* (.039)	0.13 (.048)	-.194 (.206)	-.23 (.02)	.168 (.132)	0.044 (.063)	0.049 (0.042)	Trusting local TV -4 (%28) stations
8	-.008 (.049)	.094 (.049)	-.087 (.113)	.117* (.0799)	.524* (.312)	.213 (.192)	-.301 (.207)	Trusting non-local -5 (%46) Arab TV stations
4	.029 (.043)	.073 (.043)	.224 (.272)	0.118 (.101)	0.040*** (0.014)	.311* (.179)	.133** (.066)	Trusting foreign TV -6 stations broadcasting in (%26) Arabic
9	.231 (.357)	.168*** (.043)	.169** (.101)	-.097 (.104)	.424 (.372)	.331* (.182)	0.028 (.021)	Trusting state-7 affiliated religious (%36) scholars
2	.083 (.186)	.149*** (.091)	0.113 (.102)	0.054 (.031)	0.100 (.036)	.131*** (.029)	.27*** (.062)	Trusting pro-women -8 non-state affiliated (%41) scholars
	-.16*** (.068)	0.76 (.057)	-.115 (.058)	-.012 (.063)	-0.013 (.012)	-.84*** (.111)	-.075*** (.024)	Trusting anti-women -9 non-state affiliated (%23) scholars
C. University Type								

Variables order	Educ. security	Familial security	Econ. security	Political security	Military security	Legal security	Status quo Assessment	Depend. Variables
								Indep. Var.
	0.34 0.21	0.39 0.25	-.501 (.343)	-.103 (.069)	0.083 0.061	.249 (.062)	0.008 (.022)	(%66) Governmental
	.236 (.213)	-.162 (.231)	.113 (.108)	.986*** (.074)	.189 (.085)	.451** (.118)	.026 (.023)	(%28) Private
6	.288 (.259)	0.078 (.111)	.823*** (.081)	.341*** (.106)	.250 (.138)	.310* (.184)	.244*** (.065)	(%6) Foreign
D. Field of study/Major								
5	0.094	.478 (.134)	-.589 (.334)	.496*** (.125)	-.550 (.265)	.629*** (.179)	.197*** (.076)	Social and Humanity studies (54%) Vs. Applied and natural (%46) sciences
	0.088	.187	.097	.146		.231	.25	= Pseudo R ²
Ordered Logit Regression (OLR)								Statistical technique

Robust Standard Errors using STATA 10.0, N approximately =5680 , *** significant at 99% confidence level, ** at 95% and * at 90%.