

Does Identity Matter? The Effect of Female Representation in the National Legislature on Violence Against Women

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Why is violence against women treated more seriously by some countries than others? This paper answers this question by examining the relationship between the representation of women in the legislature and the criminalization, enforcement, and perceived societal safety concerning violence against women. Using a dataset based on the U.S. State Department's 2016 human rights reports, this study shows that when controlling for factors such as regime type or economic development, having more women in the legislature increases the rates of criminalization of violence against women, but has no effect on the enforcement of laws or the general safety of women from violence. The discussion of findings includes their implications for the incorporation of women in politics and for the safety of women who face violence.

1. Introduction

In Denmark, non-consensual sex with a victim in a “helpless state” is considered sexual abuse rather than rape, and the exclusion of punishment is possible in cases of marital rape. In Haiti, murder is excused if a man killed his wife if she was found engaging in an act of adultery in his home. In Hungary, the qualification of rape depends on the use of force and not the lack of consent. In the United Arab Emirates, domestic violence is illegal but it is permissible to hit one’s wife and children. In Vietnam, a domestic abuse case is categorized as civil violence unless a victim suffers injuries covering more than eleven percent of her body¹. From an examination of all countries, we can see that some judges apply the highest sentences possible, while others apply the lowest; some police enforce these laws, others do not. The way that countries deal with violence against women varies immensely, even within their borders. It varies in the level at which they criminalize it, prosecute it, enforce it, attempt to prevent it, and attempt to aid its victims, as well as the general way that the society handles violent acts committed against women. Why do some countries criminalize all forms of violence against women while others do not? Why do some countries enforce laws on violence against women better than others? Why do some societies work to prevent violence against women while others ignore it?

Researchers claim that discrimination against women is diminished when populations see women represented in legislature, but do little to depict what that diminishment looks like. Leading theories suggest that women elected to national legislature are often able to positively affect female populations and that women generally feel more willing to open up about harassment, violence, or discrimination that they face when they see women in positions of low-level bureaucratic power. I could find no study, though, that links these two findings together, that pinpoints the extent to which women can decrease discrimination against themselves from a high position, like that of holding a seat in a national legislature. I aim to do so within the framework of violence and the way it is enforced and handled by a state.

Violence is one of the clearest forms of discrimination against any group, which is why I chose to measure the capacity of women to promote identity-based politics within its scope. I propose that where women are well represented in the national legislature, laws on violence against women will be stricter, because women will want to promote legislation that results in their promotion in society, including the diminishing of discrimination against them, which is one of the purest forms of violence. If women are represented and are enacting laws that criminalize violence

against women, then those laws should be better enforced than in countries where women are poorly represented, because there should be less discrimination against women in those countries. Discrimination will be lower because having women in office positively shifts views about the validity of women in politics. A diminishment of discrimination in this sphere means that police should view women more equally and that there should be more women in police forces. Thus, law enforcement will better enforce laws prohibiting violence against women. If these laws are well enforced, women will feel safer in their societies and provisions for other safeguards against women will be better implemented than in societies where women are poorly represented and violence against women laws are not enforced.

I tested these hypotheses by coding variables based on information found in the U.S State Department's 2016 human rights reports. My independent variable is representation of women in the national legislature and my dependent variables are criminalization of violence against women, enforcement of such laws, and general safety of women from violence. I also controlled for other variables that might affect my dependent variables, such as gross domestic product (GDP), religion, whether or not a country is a democracy, and if it is experiencing internal conflict. I find that female representation does positively affect the criminalization, that is, the creation of laws on violence against women, but that it has no effect on the enforcement of those laws or the safety of women. These findings suggest that women affect what choices are made in the legislature, but that those choices do not necessarily affect the way that every level of national institution or culture handles violence against women: only having women at one level of government, while it matters, is not sufficient to change every aspect of the issue at hand. Importantly, I find that in almost no country are women equally represented.

This paper aims to put into a clear context the country-by-country variation in laws on violence against women and seeks to show the impact of women legislators on the creation of these laws. It provides specific answers concerning the relationship between female legislative representation and prohibitions of violence against women, showing that representation is effective in the lawmaking process but not effective in ending violence against women. A theoretical argument is proposed which suggests that while the implementation of gender quotas is good, women will not be seen as equals until they are equally represented, and cannot count on societies run by men to protect them against violence, but must provide that protection themselves. I suggest that affirmative action should be adopted at every level of politics, including for low-level bureaucrats, like police officers, in order for real discrimination in the form of violence to be broken down.

I encourage readers to keep in mind the real consequences that this quantitative analysis refers to. Domestic violence not being illegal means that in some countries, women live in a reality where they are regularly hit or beaten by their family members with no hope of being able to seek aid to end such abuse. Where spousal rape is not considered rape, men essentially own the sexual rights in a heterosexual marriage. When laws on violence against women are not enforced, police officers do not take violence based around the female identity as seriously as other legal offenses. In the many societies that fit the preceding descriptions, women may have no office to consult when they have been abused or no shelter to go to if they have escaped violence, leaving them with little hope for possibilities of life without abuse.

2. Literature Review

Political scientists have found that the goals of gender quotas are achieved at varying levels depending on the structure of the government that they are applied to and the way that they are instituted². Leading studies on gender quotas show that women have a better time getting into seats of power in countries that are less democratic or those undemocratic and in countries where power is centralized rather than dispersed throughout the government and legislature³. There is also notable research that claims that even when quotas are implemented by force and not public will, elected women are successful in diminishing discrimination against them in the political sphere⁴.

Miki Caul Kittlson was one of the first to find that centralized power is better for women. She argues that women's efforts to gain political space and leverage are most effective when women recognize favorable conditions within the party and/or party system, and where they devise "context-contingent" strategies for inclusion⁵. Activism and actions of women and responsiveness of parties work together to catalyze change, but in her argument, it is generally a top-down process that provides for the most success, more so than grassroots actions. This top-down theory mimics that of a trickle-down economic theory, that action at the top will eventually affect the masses in a positive way. Hinojosa has expanded these ideas, finding that candidate election processes that are more exclusive and centralized are the most beneficial to women, which is ironic, because those are also the processes that are the least democratic⁶. These points are particularly important to my research because they suggest that political party power in the legislature is

more influential than social movements; therefore, women in the legislature might be able to control some social variation. I apply this extension of Kittilson's argument to my hypotheses.

Mona Lena Krook claims that key actors in quota debates vary depending on the country, that people pursue quota reform for feminist and non-feminist reasons, that strategic motivations often play a significant role in obtaining quotas, and that the actors *most overlooked* are international organizations and transnational networks. Quota reform can be non-feminist when quotas are adopted by largely male parties who do not have pro-women agendas, but who are trying to use that card to gain more votes. In such cases, females may be elected but can expect a hard time asserting their power, which also explains some inconsistencies between my hypothesis and findings⁷.

Sarah Bush, expanding on Krook's warning, finds that the reason so many countries today utilize gender quotas is because they are often implemented in recently non-democratic countries simultaneously with a system of democratization adopted under pressure from a third party. In these cases, quotas sometimes work poorly. Bush is skeptical that quotas implemented in these internationally incentivized ways are efficient. She notes that economic, social, and political change depends on cultural heritage, and that many of the countries that are adopting gender quotas as a result of international incentives are not home to cultural heritage that promotes women in government⁸. It is important to take Bush's findings on this practice of adoption under pressure of third parties into account when considering the more confusing parts of my study. For example, some countries who have criminalized violence against women completely ignore the laws for the same reasons that gender quotas are ignored. Or, some countries may have a high percentage of women in a legislature, but violence against women is not criminalized, because the legislature has very little power.

Rikhil Bhavnani shows that quotas for women alter chances of women winning elections even after the quotas are withdrawn. He claims that reservations work in part because they bring in women that are able to win elections, and after the quotas are removed but women continue to run, voters and parties either have experience with female incumbents and/or learn that women have the capability to win elections and perform political duties. Women must combat the hurdles of facing male incumbents as well as facing household, political party, and voter opposition in order for quotas to impact subsequent elections. Bhavnani suggests that quotas can set in motion a process that "ensures" fair representation and that there is a way in which speedy political advances can be made, but is unsure of how long those benefits might last⁹. My study will test parts of these claims by checking what kind of effects women can make when they are elected, and to what extent those effects can expand.

The research referenced to above is all related to gender quotas. Although quotas are not a specifically mentioned variable of my study, they have notably affected the independent variable, the extent of female representation in the legislature, and studies of them help to explain trends of view on women in the political sphere. This research has also been influenced by studies that investigate the results of incorporating women into politics.

Maria De Paola et al. highlight the theory of identity politics that when women's representation increases, female legislators give priority to women's issues and interests¹⁰. This thesis is essentially the same as that of Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo, but De Paola et al. also support Bhavnani's claim that even after quotas are removed in a district, women continue to be elected, because during their time in office, discrimination that previously stopped female politicians from running or winning is diminished¹¹. De Paola et al. go one step further than Bhavnani by wondering what type of discrimination is being overcome. I aim to address this question by bringing to the forefront an issue that prods at the heart of identity politics, the elimination of violence from women's daily existences.

Kenneth Meier and Jill Crotty and Lakshmi Iyer et al. have produced research that delves deeper into the issue of identity politics, and that is most similar to that which I will provide in this paper. They have shown that female representation can positively affect the amount of reporting of crimes of violence against women. Meier and Crotty found that increasing the number of women police officers results in an increase in the number of rape reports filed as well as the number of related arrests. They suggest that this is because women feel more comfortable reporting when they see like faces in the police force, whether or not the female officers are even promoting the issue of violence against women among fellow officers. They also suggest that women are sensitizing the issues to their colleagues¹². Iyer et al. have similarly shown that female representation in local government leads to a rise in reporting of crimes against women. Their results "imply that the presence of women representatives at the lowest level of governance, where they have greatest proximity to potential crime victims, is more important in giving voice to women than their presence in higher-level leadership positions, partially because the police have to confer with the local influential people if they have a problem they want fixed"¹³. The authors' evidence suggests that gender quotas lead to a rise in reporting of crimes against women, but they are only able to show it in the case of having large-scale female representation in local councils, rather than when women are in higher-level seats of leadership. Meier and Crotty, too, focus on the local level, reinforcing the importance of "street-level" bureaucrats. My study aims to explore these types of effects at the national level, applying Kittilson's theory that women affect identity issues from the top-down to those in the preceding paragraph, that women can positively affect attention towards violence against women.

3. Theory

The goal of this study is to identify the extent to which female representation in the national legislature can affect the everyday lives of women facing identity-based violence. I do so by asking the following questions: Does the criminalization of violence against women become more likely when there are female representatives in the national legislature? Does female representation in the legislature affect the likelihood of enforcement or women's safety generally? *I hypothesize that when women are well represented in the legislature, the odds of criminalization of violence against women and the enforcement of such are higher than in governments where women are poorly represented. The general societal safety of a woman from violent crimes should also increase the better women are represented.* The independent variable is the representation of women in the lawmaking body of the legislature, and my dependent variables are criminalization of acts of violence against women, enforcement of laws on violence against women, and perceived safety of women against violence in the country where they reside.

Studies show that when women are elected to office in substantiality, they are able and likely to affect policy outcomes¹⁴. According to Chattopadhyay and Duflo, mechanisms that define a politician's identity often guide their political decisions¹⁵. Therefore, it should be held that issues that affect women's identities and associations in a political sphere will affect their political decisions, and that they will be more likely to push for those policies when they are well represented legislatively.

Women's representation in legislature varies internationally from zero to 60%, largely due to the implementation of gender quota policies in over one hundred countries in the world over the last forty years¹⁶. The success of a quota system depends on many factors. There are some countries that have efficiently confronted these factors, or who have not had to struggle with many of them. As a result, their female representatives have made impacts in the policy-making process.

In the countries where women are better represented, they should promote policies that protect themselves¹⁷. What these policies look like can vary based on cultural norms and preferences, for example, in the United States, women are typically proponents of supporting the education system, whereas in Western Bengal, they focus less on promoting education than do men, because in that region, it is the males that are prioritized by the education system¹⁸. These preferences represent cultural differences: in Western Bengal education funds are spent so disproportionately on men that the women might see prioritizing education funding as a waste of time for them.

Violence against women has been described by the Secretary General of the United Nations as one of the most, if not the most, horrendous human rights violation¹⁹. The World Bank estimates that, globally, violence causes more ill-health for women than malaria and traffic accidents combined and that it is equally serious in causing death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as is cancer²⁰. While methods of supporting women might vary globally, one of the most fundamental ways to promote any group or identity is to protect it from harm. If this is true, then it should be true that when women have the ability to affect policies, they work to demote violence against women. An obvious legislative option to demote violence against women is to take preventative action against it, to criminalize it, and to make it punishable by law. Because women are likely to promote policy that represents issues particular to their identity, it is likely that women work to criminalize violence against women; therefore, in governments where women represent a substantial amount of the legislature, we can assume that violence against women is better controlled than in governments where women are poorly represented.

Women are represented better in some governments than in others. When women are better represented, they have a larger capacity to affect policy. When a certain identity is represented in government, they are likely to promote policy changes that fall in line with their identity. Policy changes that fall in line with women's identity is to protect women from physical harm through the criminalization of violence perpetrated against women. Therefore, in theory, women support the criminalization of violence against themselves.

Research shows that affirmative actions can be useful in breaking down stereotypes against women in the political sphere²¹. If women are going to promote the criminalization of violence against women in line with trends of identity politics, rates of criminalization of violence against women should rise. If criminalization rises, than enforcement of laws and the society's general provision of safety resources for women, too, should rise, because female representation should be able to affect a society beyond the extent of the legislature, in a "top-down" manner²². We can also view this situation as a sort of step-by-step process, based on the literature cited above. If women are elected, then they will make decisions that promote women in a society, an increase in criminalization of violence against women being one of them. The election of women, even through affirmative action, should result in a decrease in levels of discrimination against women, because general populations will be able to see that females can perform in positions of power. If this is true, then more women will be hired to police forces, and male police officers will respect the law and take violence

against women more seriously, rather than discriminating against women by writing it off as a non-important crime. If this is true, then enforcement of these laws will rise. If enforcement of laws rises, then the general society will feel safer, and, as a result of the top-down societal effects, will provide more safeguards for women in violent situations.

The representation of women in the legislature is likely not the only factor that affects the issue of violence against women. It is actually dependent on a web of various capacities and weaknesses. For example, a country may have produced laws that outline the creation of awareness programs, but have not allotted money to execute these programs. Another may have strong cultural ideologies that do not support the prioritization of women's safety. Others might typically support it, but, caught in the sweeping throes of internal conflict, have succumbed to a permeation of violence into all societal behaviors.

4. Research Design

4.1. Description of Variables

The measure of the independent variable is the proportion of seats held by women in the lawmaking body of the national legislature. This information is taken from the World Bank. The World Bank cites the inter-parliamentary union as their source. It is important to note that the World Bank mentions a number of limitations and exceptions that might affect their data collection, which include difficulties in obtaining information by by-election results as well as on replacements due to death or resignation and the fact that their data may not be a good indicator of women's contribution to decision-making, considering the many obstacles that women in politics face. They also explain that their indicator covers the single chamber in unicameral legislatures and the lower chamber in bicameral legislatures, but not the higher chamber in bicameral parliaments, which is why the independent variable in my study is the percent of women in the lawmaking body of the national legislature.

The measure of the dependent variables is coded based on information from the "Rape and Domestic Violence" category under the "Women" part of "Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons" from United States' State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016. These reports are prepared by the Department of State, which uses information from "U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, foreign government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, jurists and legal experts, journalists, academics, labor activists, and published reports"²³. The reports were edited by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in cooperation with other Department of State offices and with the help of experts on the issues at hand.

Based on the reports, I have coded dummy variables for whether rape, spousal rape, and domestic violence are criminalized, as well as for whether the law is generally enforced. The former three are nearly always clearly stated. General enforcement is often stated with a simple statement such as: "the law is/is not generally enforced." When it is not, I discern the level of enforcement by the description of the enforcement. Below is an excerpt from the Section 6 on Armenia. There is no explicit statement claiming that police were not enforcing the laws, but it can be inferred that such was the case:

Rape, spousal abuse, and domestic violence was underreported due to social stigma, the absence of female police officers and investigators, and at times police reluctance to act. According to local observers, most domestic violence was not reported because survivors were afraid of physical harm, apprehensive that police would return them to their husbands, or ashamed to disclose their family problems. There were also reports that police, especially outside of Yerevan, were reluctant to act in such cases and discouraged women from filing complaints. A majority of domestic violence cases were considered under the law as offenses of low or medium seriousness. In such instances a survivor might decline to press charges or perpetrators pressured them to withdraw charges or recant previous testimony²⁴.

Here is a more convoluted example from Azerbaijan:

During the year, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported 31 cases of rape and 62 cases of violence of a sexual nature. The ministry stated that 54 persons had been brought to trial for these offenses. The law establishes a framework for the investigation of domestic violence complaints, defines a process to issue restraining orders, and calls for the establishment of a shelter and rehabilitation center for survivors. Some critics of the domestic violence law asserted that a lack of clear

implementing guidelines reduced its effectiveness. Female members of the Milli Mejlis and the head of the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs (SCFWCA) continued their activities against domestic violence. The committee conducted public awareness campaigns and worked to improve the socioeconomic situation of domestic violence survivors. Women had limited recourse against assaults by their husbands or others, particularly in rural areas. The government and an independent NGO each ran a shelter providing assistance and counseling to victims of trafficking and domestic violence²⁵.

Although it is stated that “The law establishes a framework for the investigation of domestic violence complaints, defines a process to issue restraining orders, and calls for the establishment of a shelter and rehabilitation center for survivors,” which sounds generally positive, Azerbaijan would be given a zero for enforcement, because of how few cases were reported, as low reporting is often a result of police inaction, and because of the reports of critics claiming that there was trouble with enforcement.

Lastly, I computed an overall “perceived safety” score between one and five. This score reflects my perception, based on the State Department’s reports, of how safe a woman is in regards to violence against her person in the country in which she resides. I was motivated to create this score because there is often information included that is unique to a certain country or region or that is too nebulous to code. For example, in some countries, there are strict laws against rape and domestic violence, but the government does not provide adequate services to victims, or there is a high level of femicide. In others, rape will only count as rape in certain instances, or village elders deal with crime and the police are puppet figures. Therefore, this variable is incorporated, because a.) those are not issues that I felt could be consistently coded, but that cover serious topics pertinent to how violence against women is handled, and b.) because it is important to include this evidence that does not fall into the scopes of the other variables in order to be able to make the comparison if perceived safety is affected by different factors than criminalization or enforcement. A clarification of the scoring process follows.

Table 1. Categorization of Perceived Safety

1	not safe
2	one notable aspect towards improvement
3	situation on an upswing (notable aspects towards improvement have been enacted but some may not be enforced or funded), as well as some solid establishment of resources already in place
4	generally positive with a missing aspect, solidly established resources that work well but not to full capacity
5	safe

Table 1 shows how safety scores were. A one is the lowest score a country can receive and a five is the highest.

These are the aspects considered in the scoring process:

- Are women taken seriously by the law?
- Are women afraid to report violence?
- Are there awareness-raising/educational programs or campaigns?
- Are there governmental organizations that provide resources for victims?
- Are there special units dedicated to women’s issues (within the police as well as in governmental organizations)?
- Are there non-governmental organizations that work in line with or are supported by the government and that provide resources for victims?
- Are there shelters? How many? Do they provide good resources?
- Are there obvious loopholes to being charged with violence against a woman?

The dependent variables, the levels of criminalization/enforcement/safety concerning violence against women, could also be affected by other variables, which are controlled for. I control for religion as a reflection of culture, as it is a variable intertwined with how women are treated in a society, and because my dependent variables are factors of societal treatment of women/women’s issues. A set of dummy variables are used for whether a country’s population

is majority Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, or Confucian to account for Inglehart and Norris' suggestion that what inhibits undemocratic societies from becoming democratic is not a lack of volition for democracy, but their views towards gender, and that countries with a Muslim majority, traditionally Orthodox societies, Catholic, and Sino-Confucianist societies are those that struggle to democratize²⁶. The reference group to which the preceding countries will be compared to includes countries that have no dominant religion or that are majority Hindu, Buddhist, or Protestant. I use data from the CIA World Factbook to code the religion variables.

GDP is controlled for as well, because Inglehart and Norris also find that in countries where the GDP is higher, women are employed at higher rates, and therefore take more part in public society, which results in higher awareness of women's issues²⁷. Therefore, GDP could offset the impacts of religious/cultural notions that women's freedoms should be restricted and could also be a factor that explains why violence against women is prohibited. GDP data comes from the World Bank²⁸.

4.2. Method

The research question can be better answered with a quantitative rather than qualitative approach because it focuses on global variation of legislatures and societies. Percentage of women in legislature is easily calculated with numbers, and dummy variables work for my yes and no questions. I do not have the means to conduct interviews or to properly conduct case studies internationally. Notwithstanding that limitation, I wanted to answer my question by incorporating every country, in order to create a big picture based on global data, rather than applying the circumstances of a situation in one country to try to fix a seemingly similar problem in a different country.

It is important to incorporate more quantitative global studies into the realm of political science. They give one the opportunity to consider and compare all countries individually, rather than to resort to the practice of assigning theories or values to one country based on studies performed on a different country in geographical proximity. For example, people often lump regions or continents together when making generalizations, using studies from only a few countries to demarcate political differences between, perhaps, "Western Europe" and "Latin America." This is not to ignore the negative aspects that occur when conducting large quantitative research, like the fact that a whole social issue gets diluted into an assortment of ones and zeros.

As stated above, I have coded four separate dependent variables: criminalization of rape, spousal rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, and whether or not the law is enforced. As another factor of the dependent variable, but measured separately, I also have the "perceived safety," which ranges from one to five. As a control, a zero will be assigned to countries that are Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, or Confucian and a one to those that are not. Control variables are provided for GDP, whether a country is a democracy, and whether a country is experiencing internal conflict. For each dependent variable, a set of regressions will be estimated, seeking to identify any effect on increased representation of women.

I expect to see a positive relationship between the independent variable and all dependent variables except for the covered religions and internal conflict. This means that I hypothesize that as representation of women in national legislature rises, so will restrictions of violence against women. I expect that the probability that violence against women is prohibited will be higher in more developed or richer countries (as measured by GDP per capita) and that democracies will prohibit it more than non-democracies. I hypothesize that if a country is majority Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, or Confucian, prohibitions against violence against women will be lower than in the countries that fall into the reference group. I expect that if a country is experiencing internal conflict, it is more likely to prohibit violence against women than one that is not.

Although I created my own dataset for which I coded all the main variables of interest, a shortcoming of this process is that the U.S State Department's human rights reports are based off multiple sources, which means that I do not have a viable way to check the consistency of the information. A main concern that arises from this is that different people may have different ideas of whether or not a law is "enforced." Even if everyone had the same opinion, there are different levels of enforcement, and I am only cataloging two (enforced and not enforced). That being said, it must be emphasized that the data for enforcement is collected by a variety of people that work in the given country for which they are reporting on and then the state report is written by Department officials in D.C. Nevertheless, I am choosing to use enforcement as one of my variables because I feel that it is a very important factor in this investigation. Some of the countries with the strictest laws against rape have the weakest levels of enforcement. There are also issues with the safety score. It might be difficult to reproduce, which could decrease its reliability. For this, I have not included the safety score in the aggregate score, so that my own observations can be analyzed separately from the codes I have created based off the human rights reports.

4.3. Summary Statistics

Table 2. Female Representation in the Lawmaking Body of the National Legislature

MIN	0.0%
MAX	64%
MEAN	20.8%
STDEV	12.1

Note: N= 195

In Table 2 we can see that some countries have no female representation, the average amount of representation is about 20%, and the most is 64%.

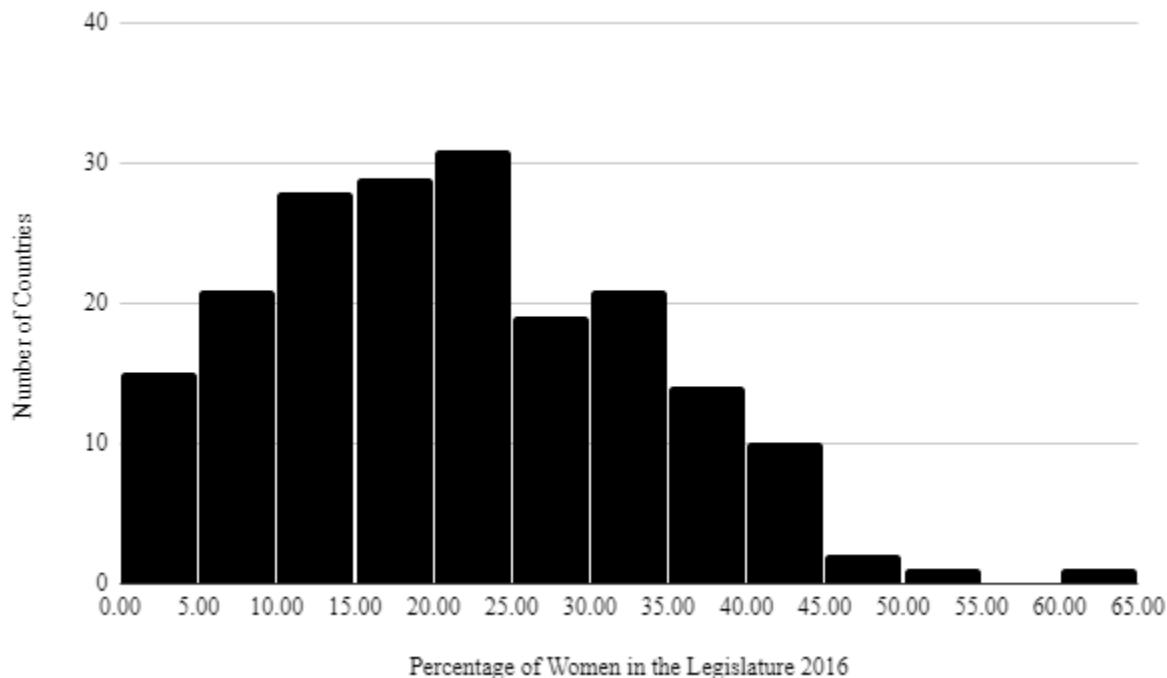


Figure 1. Histogram of female representation in the lawmaking body of the national legislature.

As seen In Figure 1, female representation falls between zero and 64%. This chart mimics a bell curve, skewed to the left, indicating that more legislatures have low representations of women than high representation, and that nearly none have more than a 45% female legislature. The bulk of legislatures are only made up of 10 to 25% women representatives.

Table 3. Criminalization and Enforcement Rates

	Rape Illegal?	Spousal Rape Illegal?	Domestic Violence Illegal?	Laws enforced?
YES	100%	59%	85%	45%
NO	0%	41%	15%	65%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: N= 195

Table 3 shows that rape is illegal in all countries, and therefore acts as a constant. Spousal rape is less criminalized than domestic violence by 26%, with criminalization rates being 59% and 85%, respectively. Laws prohibiting are enforced only 45% of the time, according to the U.S. Department of States human rights reports.

Table 4. Aggregate Score

MIN	1
MAX	4
MEAN	2.9
STDEV	0.98

In Table 4, we can see that the lowest aggregate score is one (that being because all countries have criminalized rape, and it is included in this score) and the highest is four, meaning that rape, spousal rape, and domestic violence are criminalized, and the laws are enforced. The average score is nearly three, falling high, two thirds of the way through the score range.

Table 5. Perceived Safety

MIN	1
MAX	5
MEAN	2.7
STDEV	1.4

Table 5 shows that the lowest safety score is one, the highest is five, and the standard deviation is 1.4. The mean is 2.7, a third of a point below the middle of the score range score range. This means that nearly as many countries have scores on the higher half of the range as those with scores on the lower half of it.

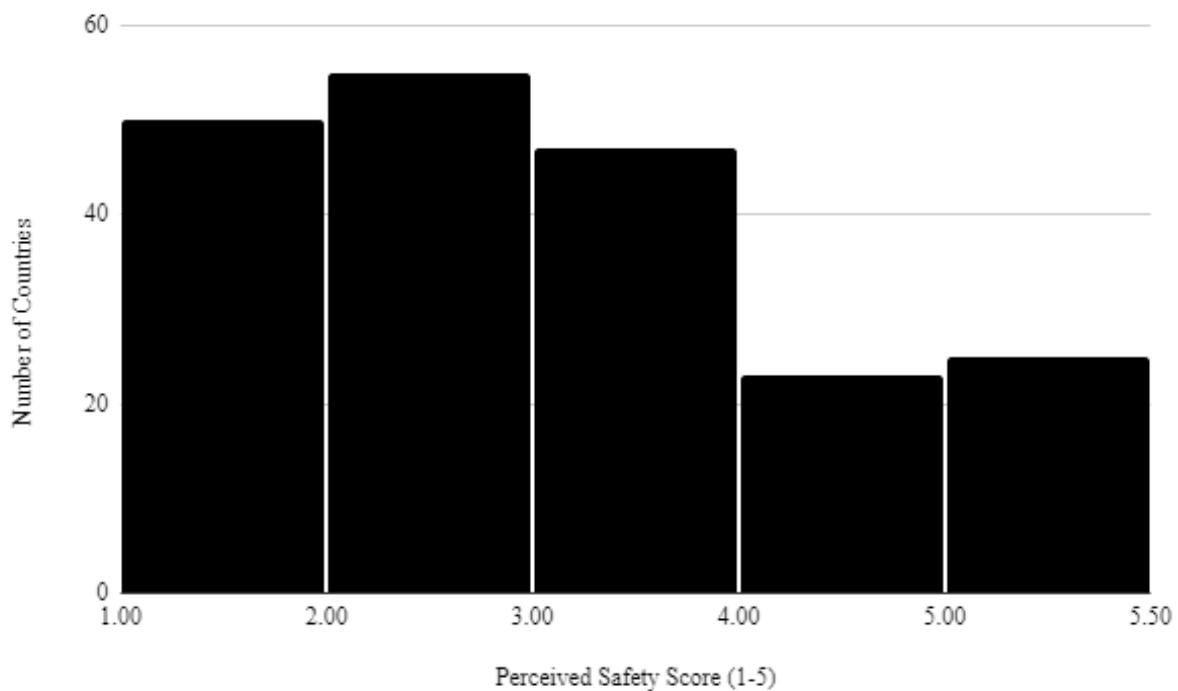


Figure 2. Histogram of safety score.

Figure 2 shows that the minimum safety score is also the lowest possible, one. The highest, likewise, is the highest possible, five. Less scores fall between four and five than between one and two, and more scores fall on the lower end of the scale than the higher end of it.

Table 6. GDP Per Capita

MIN	286
MAX	102,831
MEAN	12,060
STDEV	17,077

Table 6 shows that the minimum GDP per capita is \$286, the average is \$12,060, and the maximum is \$102,831. The average falls low, only covering the bottom nine percent of the range.

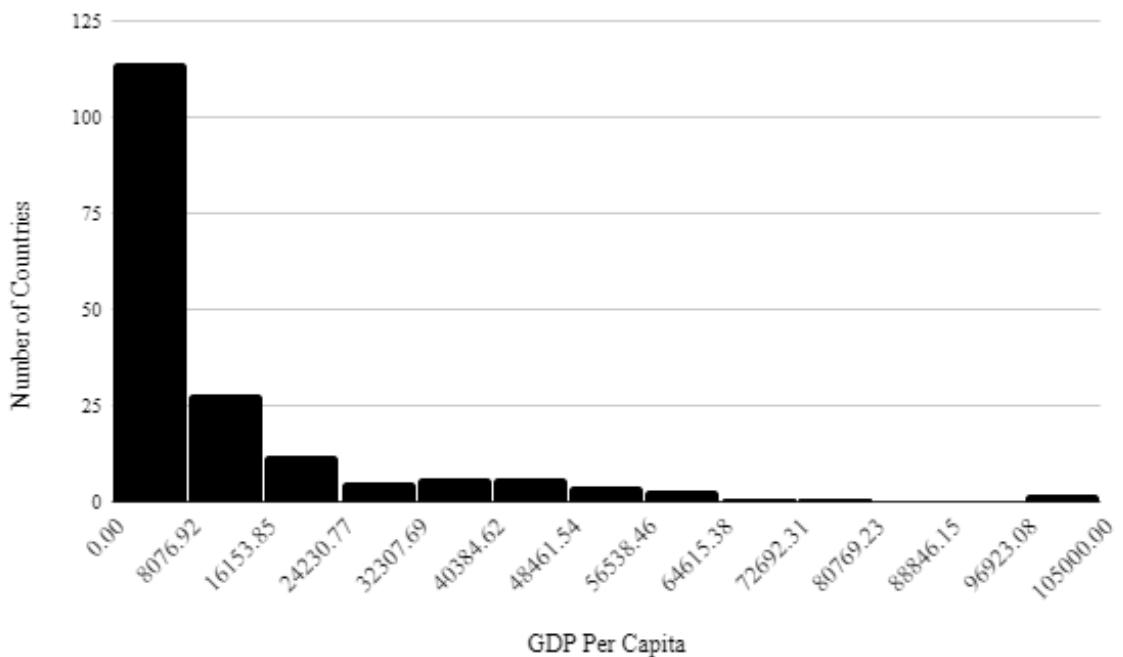


Figure 3. Histogram of GDP per capita.

The sharp skew to the left seen in Figure 3 shows that a majority of countries' GDPs per capita fall into the first thirteenth of the total range, which can also be understood as one thirteenth of the total of the highest GDP per capita (belonging to Luxembourg).

Table 7. Democracy and Conflict

	Democracy?	Conflict?
YES	58%	13%
NO	42%	77%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Note: N= 195

In Table 7, we see that 58% of countries are categorized as democratic, according to Polity scores from 2016, and that 13% were experiencing internal conflict in 2016, according to the U.S. State Department.

Table 8. Religion Majority

	Confucian?	Orthodox?	Catholic?	Muslim?
YES	2%	6%	26%	28%
NO	98%	94%	74%	72%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: N= 195

Table 8 shows that two percent of countries are majority-Muslim, 6% are majority-Orthodox, 26% majority-Catholic, and 28% majority-Muslim. Those percentages have a sum of 62%, which means that 58% of countries fall into the reference group which includes countries with no dominant religion, Buddhist, Hindu, and Protestant countries

5. Analysis

Table 9. Perceived Safety

Safety Score (1-5)	Estimate (standard error)
Intercept	2.437* (0.328)
Percent Women	-0.001 (0.010)
GDP per capita in 1000s	0.028* (0.006)
Conflict (dummy)	-0.828* (0.299)
Democracy (dummy)	0.329 (0.239)
Catholic (dummy)	0.215 (0.279)
Muslim (dummy)	-0.597* (0.274)
Orthodox (dummy)	-0.498 (0.417)
Confucian (dummy)	-0.510 (0.608)

Shown are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable was perceived safety (1-5). Stars indicate statistical significance at the 95% level.

As seen in Table 9, which shows the results estimating the effects of female representation on perceived safety, a one percent increase of women in the legislature leads to a decrease in the safety score by about 0.001. This is inconsistent with my hypothesis according to which an increase in the legislature leads to an improvement of the safety score. The result is not substantively significant, meaningful, or large; even if ten women were elected to a legislative body with 100 seats, the score would only decrease by about 0.007. The result is also not statistically significant, meaning that statistically speaking, the effect cannot be distinguished from zero. A one thousand dollar increase in the GDP per capita of a country leads to an increase in the safety score by 0.028. A one thousand dollar change in GDP per capita is not very significant, for it is not large enough to mark a difference in countries' financial situations. A ten thousand dollar increase, on the other hand, leads to an increase in the safety score by almost three points. This supports my hypothesis that economic development should improve safety, and that poorer countries are expected to have a lower score in this area. For example, the Central African Republic has a safety score of one and a GDP per capita of 382 while Suriname has a score of 4.5 and a GDP per capita of 6484. This effect is both substantively as well as statistically significant. The safety score will be lower by about 0.8 in a country experiencing internal conflict than one that is not. Considering that the safety score varies between one and five with half point intervals, this is a substantively large effect. It is also statistically significant. Countries that are democracies will have safety scores about 0.3 points higher than those that are not, a change that is substantively small and not statistically significant. Countries that are majority Catholic lead to a small (0.2) increase in the safety score. This result shows a relationship opposite of that which I hypothesized, which was that Catholic countries would result in a decrease in all independent variables compared to the reference group, which includes countries with no dominant religion, Buddhist, Hindu, and Protestant countries. A country being majority Orthodox or Confucian leads to a decrease in the safety score by about 0.5 points, compared to a country that falls in the comparison group. While this effect is substantive, it is statistically insignificant, unlike that for majority Muslim countries, which result in a 0.6 point decrease, a statistically significant result.

Table 10. Criminalization of Spousal Rape

Criminalization of Spousal Rape	Estimate (Standard Error)
Intercept	0.289* (0.114)
Percent Women	0.007 (0.003)
GDP per capita in 1000s	0.004 (0.002)
Conflict (dummy)	-0.210* (0.105)
Democracy (dummy)	0.197* (0.083)
Catholic (dummy)	0.180 (0.097)
Muslim (dummy)	-0.028 (0.095)
Orthodox (dummy)	0.154 (0.144)
Confucian (dummy)	0.021 (0.210)

Shown are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable was the criminalization of spousal rape (0, 1). Stars indicate statistical significance at the 95% level.

The results estimating the effects of representation on the likelihood that spousal rape is criminalized are shown in Table 10. It shows that one percent increase of women in the legislature leads to a 0.7% increase in the likelihood of the criminalization of spousal rape. A 20% increase of women in the legislature leads to a 14% increase in the likelihood of criminalization. This is a substantively large effect. It is important to note here that twenty percent women in the legislature is the threshold most commonly required with the implementation of a quota system, so when a quota is implemented, this is akin to guaranteeing that there is at least a 14% chance that spousal rape will be criminalized if it is not already. A \$10,000 increase in GDP per capita leads to about a 40% increase in the likelihood of the criminalization of spousal rape (with \$1,000 leading to a 0.4% increase), which is an effect that is substantively significant, but statistically insignificant. In a country experiencing internal conflict, there is about a 21% decrease in the likelihood of spousal rape being criminalized compared to one that is not, and if it is a democracy rather than not, there is about a 19.7 % increase in the likelihood that spousal rape is criminalized. Both of these results are substantively and statistically significant. Countries that are Catholic, Orthodox, and Confucian are more likely than the reference group of countries to illegalize spousal rape. Muslim countries, on the contrary are less likely, but that result is neither substantively nor statistically significant.

Table 11. Criminalization of Domestic Violence

Criminalization of Domestic Violence	Estimate (Standard Error)
Intercept	0.613* (0.079)
Percent Women	0.009* (0.002)
GDP per capita in 1000s	-0.001 (0.002)
Conflict (dummy)	-0.274* (0.073)
Democracy (dummy)	0.134* (0.058)
Catholic (dummy)	0.017 (0.067)
Muslim (dummy)	-0.014 (0.066)
Orthodox (dummy)	0.132 (0.100)
Confucian (dummy)	0.206 (0.147)

Shown are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable was the criminalization of domestic violence (0, 1). Stars indicate statistical significance at the 95% level.

In Table 11, we can see the results estimating the effects of female representation on the likelihood that domestic violence is criminalized. With a one percent increase of women in the legislature, there is about a 0.9% increase in the likelihood of the criminalization of domestic violence. This means that if 20 women are added to a 100 seat legislature, the likelihood of domestic violence being made illegal is increased by about 18%. This result is substantively and statistically significant. The results for GDP per capita, on the other hand, less significant than in other cases, but still considerable. Even a \$10,000 increase results in an only about one percent increase in the likelihood of criminalization of domestic violence. This effect may be so little because the criminalization of domestic violence is a phenomenon that has recently been implemented in many developing countries during relatively recent democratization processes ushered by the United Nations or other transnational organizations; therefore, many poor countries have made domestic violence illegal (Bush 2011). If a country is experiencing internal conflict, the likelihood that domestic violence is criminalized decreases by 27.4%, compared to one which is not. This effect is significant substantively and statistically, as is that of democratized countries. A country that is a democracy is 13.4 % more likely to criminalize domestic violence than one that is not. Again, Countries that are Catholic, Orthodox, and Confucian have a positive relationship with the likelihood of criminalization compared to reference countries, while Muslim societies' continue to have a negative relationship comparatively, although it is substantively and statistically insignificant.

Table 12. Enforcement

Enforcement	Estimate (Standard Error)
Intercept	0.362* (0.105)
Percent Women	-0.001 (0.003)
GDP per capita in 1000s	0.010* (0.002)
Conflict (dummy)	-0.364* (0.096)
Democracy (dummy)	0.204* (0.076)
Catholic (dummy)	-0.047 (0.089)
Muslim (dummy)	-0.154 (0.087)
Orthodox (dummy)	-0.226 (0.133)
Confucian (dummy)	-0.475* (0.194)

Shown are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable was enforcement (0, 1). Stars indicate statistical significance at the 95% level.

Table 12 shows the results estimating the effects of female representation on enforcement. A one percent increase in the number of women in the legislature leads to about a 0.1% decrease in the likelihood of effective enforcement of laws concerning violence against women. This relationship is negative rather than the hypothesized positive, substantively significant, and statistically insignificant. The lack of a substantively meaningful effect is not surprising, because it is the legislature that makes the laws and the executive that enforces them. Whether or not the laws are generally enforced is based on the functioning of local police and legal systems, which are largely made up of men. As research has shown, male law enforcement officials are less likely than their female counterparts to enforce laws on violence against women. For every one dollar increase in GDP per capita, the likelihood of enforcement increases by about 100%, meaning that it is almost 100% more likely that the law is enforced in a rich country than a poor country. This result is substantively and statistically significant. A country in internal conflict is 36.4% less likely to enforce violence against women laws than one not in conflict, which is significant in both senses. Catholic countries are 4.7% less likely to enforce laws on violence against women than are reference countries, which is substantively and statistically insignificant. Muslim countries are fifteen point four percent less likely and Orthodox countries are 22.6% less likely to enforce than reference countries. Both results are substantively significant and statistically insignificant. Confucian societies are 47.5% less likely to enforce than comparative societies, which is substantively and statistically significant.

Table 13. Aggregate Score

Aggregate Score (1-4)	Estimate (Standard Error)
Intercept	2.220 (0.203)
Percent Women	0.014* (0.006)
GDP per capita in 1000s	0.012* (0.004)
Conflict (dummy)	-0.705* (0.187)
Democracy (dummy)	0.596* (0.147)
Catholic (dummy)	0.141 (0.172)
Muslim (dummy)	-0.183 (0.169)
Orthodox (dummy)	0.150 (0.257)
Confucian (dummy)	-0.198 (0.375)

Shown are OLS coefficients and standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable was the aggregate score (1-4). Stars indicate statistical significance at the 95% level.

The results estimating the effects of female representation on the aggregate score Table 13. The aggregate score is the score for criminalization of rape, criminalization of spousal rape, criminalization of domestic violence, and enforcement. It should be noted that it is really only a three point scale, because spousal rape acts as a constant, as it is criminalized in every country. For every one percent increase in women in the legislature, the aggregate score increases by about 0.014. If 20 women are added to a 100 seat legislature, the score increases by about 1.4, which is substantive, as well as statistically significant. For every \$100 increase in GDP per capita, the score will increase by over one point. This is substantively significant, considering a three point scale, as well as statistically significant. If a country is experiencing internal conflict, the aggregate score will decrease by 0.7 points compared to a country that is not, an effect that is generally substantively and statistically significant. A country that is a democracy will have a score about 0.6 points higher than one that is not. This result is statistically and substantively significant, considering that 0.6 points covers a little more than one sixth of the range. Catholic and Orthodox countries have a positive effect on the aggregate score versus those that fall in the comparison group, but the results are neither substantively nor statistically significant. Muslim and Confucian Countries have a negative effect on the aggregate score versus the comparison group, but the results are also neither substantively nor statistically significant.

5.1. Discussion of Findings

My findings support half of my hypothesis and are inconsistent with my expectations for the other half: the amount of female representation in the lawmaking body of the legislature positively affects the rates of criminalization of violence against women but has no effect on the enforcement or safety scores. For the religion variables, the relationship between majority Catholic countries and the independent variables was almost always the opposite of my hypothesis when compared to the reference group (there is positive relationship between them rather than a negative one). This may be so because the reference group to which Catholic countries were compared includes Buddhist and Hindu countries, which, according to the data set for this study, scored generally low concerning their laws and practices on violence against women. Majority-Orthodox countries showed mixed results between positive and negative relationships with the dependent variables, which suggests that the Orthodox culture does not result in an across-the board result on treatment of women, which we do see in the case of majority-Muslim countries. For every test, majority-Muslim countries negatively affected the independent variables, although the results were not always substantively or statistically significant. Confucian countries also showed mixed results, but had an outstandingly negative effect on the rates of enforcement. This is consistent with my reading of the Department of State reports,

which suggest that Confucian-oriented countries have difficulty confronting issues of violence against women, especially domestic violence.

Whether or not a country is in conflict has a very consistently negative effect on all of the independent variables, and is the only dependent variable that always has statistically significant results at the 95% confidence level. A country being a democracy positively affects the independent variables in all cases, as does having a high GDP per capita. GDP per capita is less consistently influential than democracy, but is especially effective for the enforcement variable. This supports the fact that poor countries often have good laws on the books concerning violence against women, but have no way of implementing such laws because of a lack of funding. What we can gather from these results is that having women in the lawmaking body of the national legislature, being a democracy, being financially stable, and not being majority Muslim, Orthodox, or Confucian rather than Christian or without a religious majority generally help a country deal with violence against women. Being in internal conflict, being financially unstable, and being majority Muslim generally diminishes a country's ability to support and protect women. It is important to note that these factors are being considered within the limitations of this study. While the conclusions of the study lend themselves to general truths, they are based on data collected from 195 reports on each individual country and in that way, can be evaluated as both broad and specific.

6. Conclusion

In Haiti, where murder is excused if a man killed his partner because they were found cheating on him in his home, there are no women representatives in the national legislature. In Hungary, where the qualification of rape depends on the use of force and not the lack of consent, only 10% of the legislature is female. Both of these laws and statistics support that a country's laws on violence against women reflect the level of representation of women lawmakers. In the United Arab Emirates, domestic violence is illegal but it is permissible to hit one's wife and children, and "female victims of rape or other sexual crimes faced the possibility of prosecution for consensual sex outside marriage instead of receiving assistance from authorities." 23% of the UAE's lawmaking body of the national legislature is female. Similarly, in France, 26% of that body is female, but all forms of violence are illegal and "the government budgeted 66 million euros (73 million dollars) to fund its 2014-16 interministerial plan to combat violence against women, a 50% increase above the previous three-year plan"²⁹. The comparison of these cases represents the murky areas of my study. One country might have as many women represented as another, but due to other legal, political, social, financial, and cultural circumstance, the women's ability to affect as much on-the-ground change may be hindered.

6.1. Summary

When women are in positions of legislative power, we expect laws to protect women from violence. We also expect to find a relationship between women in the legislature and enforcement of laws against violence and the general societal safety of women from violence. I examined these hypotheses in the sections of criminalization of rape, spousal rape, and domestic violence as well as enforcement and perceived safety of women against violence. I coded these variables from human rights reports released by the U.S State Department. My results generally supported my hypothesis, which provides evidence that having women in the legislature makes a change. Female representation in the legislature positively affects the criminalization of spousal rape and domestic violence, but has an insignificant and negative effect on safety and enforcement of related law. These results speak to limitations of the ability of the national lawmaking body to affect local conditions, as enforcement is based mostly on local/state law functioning and the police, not the lawmakers.

"Perceived safety," measures my reaction to the ways a country deals with violence against women concerning their aid provided to victims of violence or their awareness rising and prevention schemes, according to the human rights reports. My measure for safety is the most subjective measure of those used in this study, and has the most to do with the way that the general population and lower-level politics handle violence against women. It and enforcement reflect how safe a woman might feel in the country she lives in. I have often included the word "perceived" because this safety score is dependent on my perception of the human rights reports, which are based on perceptions of the reporters.

Rarely are more than thirty percent of lawmakers female. As seen in this study, there being enough female representation in the lawmaking body of the legislature to affect the outcome of national laws is neither strictly related to the public's consciousness towards ending violence against women, nor to law enforcement's respect of those laws. What female representation does affect is adoption of protective laws against gender-based violence. The capacity of

a state to gain wealth or be democratic positively affected enforcement and perceived safety, while internal conflict did so negatively.

If one views the law as a base of political and societal change, then this is a positive result, but if one sees cultural factors as that base, they may see problems with the current situation that my study provides. In order to account for other factors that might have been affected by my independent variables, I included the dependent variables of democracy, GDP, religion, and whether or not a country was experiencing internal conflict in 2016. I found that being a democracy, having a high GDP per capita, and being majority Catholic were all positively related to the dependent variables. Experiencing internal conflict and being majority Muslim rather than another religion did not.

6.2. Implications

The significance of these results is that having women in the lawmaking body of national legislatures is important and is linked to higher criminalization of violence against women.

For most women, violence against women is an attack on the female identity. That laws against it emerge when women are in office suggests that when women have power, they will work towards the end of discrimination against those that identify with being female. The rise in criminalization of violence against women when more women are in the legislature shows that when only men are in the legislature, it is less likely that women's rights will be protected. Notwithstanding the simplicity of these facts, they bear weight on the way that the inclusion of women in politics is viewed. The disparities shown by this research demonstrate that having women in legislatures is not only important because it reflects the demographics of the population being represented, but also because it allows for the needs of the population to be taken into concern more evenly. It shows that despite the fact women are sometimes introduced into legislatures because of external pressures rather than a belief in their necessity, the decisions they make highlight that they are indeed vital, being accountable for population needs that men do not address. In short, inclusion of women matters. It results in a more inclusive, fair legislature that addresses the needs of a broader demographic.

Numbers of women in the legislature remain low. The average is about 21%, only 22 countries have more than 35%, and only two have more than 50% (Bolivia with 52% and Rwanda with 64%). For nearly every country with 30 or more percent women in the lawmaking body of the legislature, the case is so because there either currently is, or at one point was, an implemented gender quota system requiring a certain amount of female representation. (The United States, which claims to be on the frontier of human rights and equality, has no quota system and only 22% of its legislators are women.)

What we can conclude from the above is that women do not run or are not elected into office at the same rates as men, but that when they do hold positions of political power, they make important decisions and provide voice for the underrepresented half of the population, even if their election was because of a vote-seeking, non-feminist adoption of gender quota. Quotas are important, should be adopted by legislatures that have not already done so, including those at sub-national levels, and should be raised to 50% and applied to all bodies of the legislature, rather than just the lawmaking body.

The results also show that an increase in the number of women in the legislature does not affect national tendencies towards keeping women safe against violence. This is likely because in many of the countries where there are 20 or more percent of females in a legislature, it is the result of an enforced quota often adopted by pressure from the United Nations or other organizations, and not because of a majority opinion or public will. The lower levels of government and the bureaucracy are therefore largely constituted of men. In order for female-oriented goals to hold the greatest effect, there need to be women involved in all levels of government. This is in agreement with Tim Sass and Jennifer Troyer, who find that "affirmative action litigation significantly increased hiring of new female recruits, but female political representation in the form of female city councilors or mayors did not significantly affect the gender composition of police recruits"³⁰.

My findings contradict Kittilson's findings that women can affect social change from the top³¹. Having women in the legislature can be effective if there are other socio-economic variables that support prevention of violence against women, but the number of women sitting in seats in a national house is not sufficient for the protection of women from violence, nor is it a guarantee that women will be inspired to make change at grassroots levels. For example, in some of the related studies performed in developing countries, many women living in rural areas had no idea that gender quotas had been adopted and that women were being elected into legislative seats. In those situations, we should not expect to see women feeling empowered by seeing female women in political positions, because the only way they might see such an instance is if they apply themselves to those positions.

6.3. Limitations

Methodological issues might be taken with the safety score, because it is based on my reactions. When I decided to use the safety score, I knew that it could potentially be easily invalidated, but decided to continue with it nevertheless because it is the only indicator that measures how safe women feel in the atmosphere of the country in which they live. An argument for the reliability of the safety score is that its average was only slightly less than halfway between the lowest and highest possible scores, and shows that I was not a skewed indicator, but measured within the realm of statistical probability.

This study has other various limitations. A data-related limitation has to do with the fact that it is based around human rights reports and not personally acquired information. The human rights reports are produced by the U.S. State Department, which operates under a biased government. There may be a lack of consistency within the way the reports themselves are created. Different people from different sorts of groups write these reports and then turn them into the State Department in D.C. One person may have spent a sizeable amount of time focusing on the issues concerning women, while another may have focused on a different issue. It is important to note that I have not evaluated the actual situation in any given country, but the situation as dictated by the U.S. State Department.

6.4. Future Research

There are a sum of interrelated issues that this research points to. It shows that the number of women in the legislature is not the only factor that affects the criminalization of violence against women. When a country is experiencing internal conflict, is poor, or undemocratic, women are at higher risk of facing violence. One might look at how much more likely a rich country is to enforce laws than a poor one and to ask a new research question about whether laws can be enforced without proper funding. One might look deeper into the correlation between a country experiencing internal conflict and being majority Muslim.

If one wanted to further this research in the same trajectory, they could look at other types of laws that women might be expected to affect, support, or lobby for more than do men when they have lawmaking power, or, most specifically, attempt to measure whether the number of women in the lawmaking body of the legislature has to do with the number of women represented at other levels of government, and if so, what the effects are.

Although these results may seem obvious to some, they have not been shown by any scholars that I have read. My research contributes the background information necessary to make the claim that equal representation is important at *all* levels of legislature and bureaucracy. This study provides one with material to argue that not just equal representation of women, but of all oppressed groups, is important. In reading this proof of what may have already seemed obvious, some may realize just how absurd reality is, how unjust it is that the vast majority of political power world-wide is held by one group. More people should conduct research similarly simplistic, so that at a certain point, the truth will drown out arguments that support centralized, unrepresentative power.

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