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REFORMING MUSLIM FAMILY LAWS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF ADVOCACY DRIVERS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECTIONS IN OIC MEMBER STATES

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ABSTRACT

Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) in member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) exert considerable influence on pivotal issues such as divorce prerogatives, polygyny regulations, and guardianship rights. Despite increasing advocacy for reforms, the predictive factors driving these changes remain insufficiently explored. This study empirically investigates the determinants of MFL reform advocacy across 14 OIC countries in Asia and Africa. Utilizing a sample of 350 legal experts, family law practitioners, and stakeholders, data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) in SPSS (v23.0). The instrument's reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's Alpha. Results indicate that social rights ($\beta = .787$) and health rights ($\beta = .167$) are the most significant predictors of reform advocacy, whereas gender identity, freedom, and political-economic rights exhibited negligible effects. The findings underscore the necessity for OIC policymakers to prioritize social and health rights frameworks within family law reforms. This study contributes to the literature by identifying actionable levers for legal reform and advocating targeted stakeholder engagement to enhance rights-based protections in Muslim-majority contexts.

KEYWORDS: Muslim Family Laws, Islamic Law Reform, OIC Countries, Children's Rights, Empirical Legal Studies, Social Rights.

1. INTRODUCTION

The discourse about human rights in general have made Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to show a complex stance. Muslim nations encounter numerous obstacles when it comes to enacting changes in family legislation, which encompass issues pertaining to gender disparity, human rights, Islamic values, responsibility to protect the interest of Muslims and the relationship between state and religion (Castillo, 2014; Negrón-Gonzales, 2015; Kayaoglu, 2015; Gunn and Lagresa, 2016; Petersen and Kayaoglu, 2019). More specifically, as a result of contradictory statements on Islam and issues of human rights in Muslim family laws (MFLs). The motivation for this study emerged from issues of sexual orientation and gender equality by the United Nations Human Rights Council. The justification for the selection of OIC countries from Asian and Africa countries was due to the fact the selected countries have similar challenges regarding family matters, and they also kicked against the endorsement of LGBT rights as part of sexual orientation and gender identity by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Hence, reform of Muslim Family Laws in selected OIC countries has been a subject of considerable transformation throughout the years. Scholarly investigations have revealed that the incorporation of MFLs into the legal frameworks of both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority nations has been executed with a range of reform strategies using human rights framework (Kayaoglu, 2013). These transformations have been shaped by various factors including historical legacies of colonialism, dynamics of state-religion relationships, diffusion of international norms, advocacy efforts by women, and the presence of diverse ethno-religious communities (Blitt, 2016). Despite endeavours in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt to safeguard the rights of women in the realm of family law, obstacles and controversies persist, particularly in the case of Saudi Arabia (Bacik, 2011; Majid, 2017).

Moreover, countries like Syria and Sudan have adhered to Islamic legal principles in their legal structures, while Turkey has opted for Western legal standards, underscoring the diverse methodologies employed for family law reform within OIC countries with an emphasis on gender identity rights (Blitt, 2018). These reform initiatives are designed to elevate the status of women and children, enhance compliance with human rights principles, and bolster the efficacy of the rule of law within Muslim family law frameworks (Blitt, 2018). Previous attempts to advocate for the amendment of Muslim

family laws are documented in a study that highlights initiatives undertaken in several OIC countries across Asia and Africa connecting values of Islam and international organizations (Castillo and Ángeles, 2015). Specifically, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has endeavoured to promote legal reforms directed at discriminatory religious and personal laws, emphasizing the crucial legal advocacy efforts carried out by local women's rights organizations in the mentioned countries (Asma, 2019).

Moreso, an assessment of the different strategies implemented by governments to modify biased laws and counter resistance to legislative changes is elaborated in the cursory literature. The extant literature further presents a thorough legal evaluation of Muslim family laws in predominant OIC Asia and Africa, examining the level of discrimination faced by Muslim women and girls as acknowledged in modern family law (Monshipouri and Kayaoglu, 2019; Siddiqui, 2023). As a result of the challenge of discrimination and violence against women and girls, studies have advocated for reform of Muslim family laws. Undoubtedly, the discourse about the concept of women's equality, even within the family unit, is acknowledged in international law and civil society cooperation by strengthening human rights engagement (Peterson, 2019).

Nevertheless, in numerous OIC nations, personal status laws concerning marriage, divorce, property division, inheritance, adoption, and related issues are either not subject to constitutional provisions against discrimination or are under the jurisdiction of the relevant legal framework for human rights (Petersen, 2019; Mozaffari, 2024). The justification for conducting this study has been reiterated in previous that said, there is a necessity to conduct a detailed examination of critical areas of concern related to family matters in countries within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) where Muslim women and girls face discriminatory practices under prevailing Muslim family regulations whereby literature identifies solidarity in solving the challenges (Cismas, 2018; Abbas and Ahmed, 2024).

Previous effort in advocating for the reform of Muslim family laws has been established in the study that reported the efforts made to address different issues relating to different rights such as gender identity, economic, health, political, social rights among others in some countries in both Asia and Africa (Chase, 2016; Castro-Peraza, et al, 2019). More specifically, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has tried to push for legal reforms targeting discriminatory religious and

personal laws; underscores the vital legal advocacy work carried out by local women's rights groups in the aforementioned countries (McGill, 2014). The implementation of reforms in these nations varies which significantly, influenced by factors such as the framework of legal systems established by colonial regulations, the necessity to address gender inequality through reform of Muslim family laws have not been empirically investigated in the recent studies. The persistence of challenges and gaps like delays in case handling, mistreatment in polygamous unions, and negligence of financial support post-divorce emphasizes the ongoing difficulties experienced by women in manoeuvring through the intricacies of Islamic family legal frameworks that hinder guaranteeing rights in MFLs. International human rights instruments, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are pivotal in influencing changes in Muslim Family Laws through the advancement of gender equality (Hu, 2020; Vásquez, McMahon, Murphy and Schneider, 2020).

The novelty of this study is that the identified predictive factors of advocacy for reform of MFLs would underscore the significance of tackling gender gaps, misinterpretations of Islamic regulations, and historical inheritances to guarantee more just and rights-supportive adjustments in family laws in OIC countries. In addition, there is a need for evaluation of various measures adopted by governments to amend discriminatory laws and address resistance to legislative changes were elucidated. It is paramount to explore the prioritization of different measures of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws that could lead to legislative modifications in predominant Muslim countries. Literature posits for enhancing productivity in research and higher education among members of OIC (Ikramul and Tanveer, 2020). Thus, there is need to explicitly offer an intricate examination of important key areas of concern related to family affairs in OIC countries where Muslim women and girls encounter discrimination under existing Muslim family laws. This study investigates multifarious factors of advocacy for reform of MFLs in selected OIC countries. The study therefore tries to answer this research question that states thus: What are the predictive factors of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explains review of relevant literature under different subheadings as follows: An overview of human rights by the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC), advocacy for reform Muslim family laws and highlighting predictive factors of reform in Muslim family laws (gender identity rights; freedom rights; economic rights; political rights; health rights and social rights).

2.1. An Overview of Human Rights by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

In 1972, the establishment of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference transpired and transformed into Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Overall human rights in general and different rights within the family are paramount to the stakeholders in OIC countries. More importantly, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam was formulated by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Advocates argue that it is not intended as a substitute for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), but rather serves as a complement to it (Hu, 2020; Vásquez, McMahon, Murphy and Schneider, 2020). Article 24 asserts that all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration are contingent upon adherence to Islamic Shari'ah law, while Article 25 further emphasizes that Islamic Shari'ah is the sole point of reference for interpreting any of the Declaration's provisions relating to family law (Şener, 2021; Alfredsson and Eide, 2023). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the OIC staunchly defended states against censure within the United Nations Human Rights Council. In tandem with revisions to the OIC's charter in 2008, member states established the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) (Slezkine, 2014). Comprised of eighteen individuals with diverse educational and professional backgrounds, the IPHRC operates as an advisory entity independent of the OIC. Empowered to oversee human rights practices within OIC states, the IPHRC plays a pivotal role in mainstreaming human rights across all OIC initiatives. Additionally, the IPHRC aids in advancing political, civil, and economic rights throughout the OIC's membership (Majid, 2017; Blitt, 2018). In September 2017, the Independent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the OIC vehemently denounced human rights abuses targeting Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar

In March 2012, the inaugural dialogue on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council subsequent to the endorsement of LGBT rights in 2011 through a resolution proposed by the Republic of South Africa (Blitt, 2018). During this session, the representative of Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the OIC, criticized the

discourse and queried the notion of sexual orientation, contending that it advocated for behaviours that are contrary to the core tenets of numerous religions, notably Islam (Majid, 2017). Emphasizing that the council should abstain from revisiting the subject matter, a number of Arab and African nations exited the meeting. Furthermore, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey passed legislation decriminalizing homosexuality as literature posits (Majid, 2017; Blitt, 2018).

Human rights issues in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries are multifaceted. The OIC has shown a complex stance on human rights, with some researchers criticizing its contradictory statements on Islam and human rights (Slezkine, 2014). The OIC's engagement with human rights mechanisms and discourse has evolved, including the establishment of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC). However, the OIC's approach to international human rights norms, particularly regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights, has been contentious, with a focus on promoting Islamic family values that exclude LGBTI individuals (Petersen and Kayaoglu, 2019). Additionally, the reception and application of international human rights standards in Arab States, many of which are OIC members, are influenced by factors such as the dualistic nature of legal systems and the impact of Islam, leading to a divergence from universal human rights concepts (Castillo, 2014). Additionally, the OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) has been criticized for its methodology and conclusions that contradict international human rights law, undermining the purpose of regional human rights mechanisms (Şener, 2021). The OIC's unique position as an intergovernmental organization representing predominantly Muslim states complicates the promotion of gender identity rights, as it asserts its role as the collective voice of the Muslim world while opposing recognition of SOGI rights (Castillo, 2014). These challenges highlight the complex landscape of gender identity rights within OIC countries, necessitating a nuanced approach to address these issues effectively through the adequate reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries.

2.2. Advocacy for Reform Muslim Family Laws

The OIC's advocacy for the protection of the family based on traditional Islamic values as the fundamental basis for the clamouring for family law reforms in OIC countries. Family law reforms in OIC countries have aimed to strengthen women's rights, particularly in the realm of divorce, through various

approaches such as intra-doctrinal and extra-doctrinal reforms. These reforms have been influenced by factors like politics, economics, and social law, leading to changes in areas like polygamy, inheritance, and marriage registration as literature (Jones, 2020). Procedural law reforms have been utilized to limit men's divorce prerogatives and constrain polygyny without challenging men's unilateral divorce rights (Sezgin, 2023). Muslim-majority and -minority countries have undertaken different forms of legislative reform, with Muslim-majority nations focusing on substantive reforms while Muslim-minority states prioritizing exit reforms (Sezgin, 2023). Despite advancements, challenges remain in fully protecting women's rights and ensuring gender equality in marriage laws in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia (Castro-Peraza et al, 2019).

Furthermore, gender identity rights face significant challenges in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries due to the OIC's staunch opposition to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights as literature contends (McGill, 2014). Muslim Family Laws in selected Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries have undergone significant reforms over the years. Research indicates that Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries have integrated Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) into their legal systems, with varying approaches to reform as literature posits (Welchman, Jouriou and Sharafeldin, 2023). These reforms have been influenced by factors such as colonial heritage, state-religion relations, international norm diffusion, women's activism, and ethnoreligious diversity. While some countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt have made efforts to protect women in family law reforms, challenges and polemics still exist, particularly in Saudi Arabia (Moors, 2018). Additionally, countries like Syria and Sudan have maintained Islamic law values in their legal systems, while Turkey has adopted Western legal standards, showcasing diverse approaches to family law reform within OIC countries (Negrón-Gonzales, 2015; Kayaoglu, 2015; Petersen and Kayaoglu, 2019). Literature contends that Israel and India have made several efforts to reform Muslim family laws with specific focus on women's rights (Sezgin, 2017). These reforms aim to improve the status of women and children, enhance human rights compliance, and strengthen the rule of law within the Muslim Family Law systems (Siddiqui, 2023).

Reform of Muslim Family Laws has been a significant focus in Muslim countries, with legislative changes aimed at improving women's rights and the

rule of law and social practices within these legal systems (Moors, 2018). Family law reforms in Muslim-majority nations have often involved to prioritize substantive reforms and procedural changes to increase state control over family matters, particularly in areas like divorce and polygyny, without fundamentally altering Islamic family law principles (Shaikh, 2020; Chaudhary, 2021). Reforms in MFLs have been undertaken through procedural and substantive changes, aiming to enhance women's and children's rights while maintaining Islamic values (Monshipouri and Kayaoglu, 2019). Additionally, comparative studies have shown variations in the adoption of Islamic law and Western legal standards among different countries like Syria, Sudan, Turkey, and Indonesia, reflecting diverse approaches to legal reform in the Muslim world through participation of state in giving support for legislation (Shaikh, 2020).

Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) regulate various aspects like marriage, divorce, inheritance, issues in age for marriage in Muslim family and guardianship in Muslim-majority countries (Monshipouri and Kayaoglu, 2019; Puspita and Octariza, 2022). Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries have both engaged in legislative reforms to strengthen the rule of law within their MFL systems, with Muslim-minority countries often prioritizing exit rights and Muslim-majority countries focusing on substantive reforms especially by promoting equality and women economic empowerment (Blitt, 2016; Majeed, 2020). For instance, Turkey underwent a significant shift by adopting Western legal standards over Islamic law, leading to a dichotomy between applying Islamic family law and secular civil codes, causing legal complexities in areas like marriage and divorce (Alaabed, Askari, Iqbal and Ng, 2016; Siddiqui, 2023). These differences highlight the diverse approaches to family law across Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries, reflecting varying historical, cultural, and legal influences as part of effort to promote the rule of law (Graycar, 2000; Graycar, 2012; Marboe, 2013).

Reforms in Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) have had varying impacts on the rights of women and children whereby Muslim countries have undertaken legislative reforms to improve women's and children's rights within their MFL systems such as giving financial support, their participation in educational and political engagement (Haque, Chowdhury, Ahmad and Rakibuddin, 2020). These reforms have aimed to alleviate the effects of religious laws on fundamental human rights, increase accountability, and strengthen the rule of

law within MFL systems. Changes introduced through procedural law have increased judicial oversight and state control over family matters, affecting issues like divorce prerogatives, polygyny constraints, and guardianship rights (Monshipouri and Kayaoglu, 2019). However, some reforms with patriarchal interpretations of religious law codes have been shown to potentially decrease women's bargaining power and utility outside marriage, impacting child wellbeing through factors like poor health investment and early marriage entry using the framework family law reform (De Cruz, 2010). Efforts to curb harmful practices like child marriage through Islamic law frameworks such as Islamic politics (*Siyasa al-Shar'iyya*) have been proposed in previous studies to advance children's rights in Muslim countries (Cherif, 2010; Graycar, 2013).

Muslim countries face several challenges in implementing reforms in family laws, including issues related to gender inequality, misinterpretation of Islamic sources, colonial heritage, and state-religion relations (Joffe and Neil, 2013). The reform processes in these countries vary significantly, influenced by factors such as the structure of legal systems shaped by colonial policies, the need to combat gender inequality through Islamic feminist approaches, and the prioritization of different types of legislative reform in Muslim countries (Haque, Chowdhury, Ahmad and Rakibuddin, 2020; Taskhiri, 2024).

Family law reforms in Muslim-majority countries have aimed at alleviating the effects of religious laws on human rights, increasing accountability, and strengthening the rule of law within their systems. On the other hand, procedural law reforms have been utilized in many Muslim- countries to introduce changes without challenging substantive Islamic family law, particularly in matters like divorce prerogatives and polygyny constraints as literature contends (Petersen, 2019; Siddiqui, 2023). Additionally, the structure of legal systems, influenced by colonial policies, plays a significant role in shaping the engagement with family law reforms in Muslim-majority countries like Morocco and Jordan (Bacik, 2011; Castillo and Angeles, 2015). Islamic feminist groups, such as Sisters in Islam (SIS), have emerged in countries like Malaysia to combat gender inequality by reinterpreting Islamic sources and offering legal services in various fields (Slezkine, 2014; Şener, 2021).

Muslim countries have adopted various approaches to address the challenges they face. One significant approach involves reevaluating the traditional *ijtihād* paradigm to enhance flexibility

and rigor in legal thinking in wide spectrum of human endeavours in general and Islamic family laws in particular (Jones, 2020). Additionally, there is a call for a re-creation of society based on values of generosity and cooperation, showcase tolerance, understanding, and the concept of sharing without judgment as a way to positively impact the global community (Majid, 2017).

Implementing reforms in Muslim Family Laws faces challenges such as antiquated statutes causing prolonged legal disputes, differing priorities in reform types in Muslim countries, issues like polygamy and women's rights in divorce influenced by technological advancements (Majid, 2017). This could be regarded occasional problems in the execution of Islamic family law in Malaysia, including delays in case management and abuse of women's rights, and debates on the equality between Islamic Family Law and Family Law in the Muslim world community (Chaudhary, 2021).

Nevertheless, there are challenges such as delays in case management, abuse in polygamous marriages, and maintenance neglect after divorce continue to persist, highlighting the ongoing struggles faced by women in navigating the complexities of Islamic family law systems (Welchman, Jouriou and Sharafeldin, 2023). These challenges underscore the importance of advocating for reform in MFLs by addressing gender disparities, misinterpretations of Islamic laws and ensuring more equitable and rights-friendly family law reforms in Muslim countries (Chaudhry, 2017). To address these challenges, literature posits that there is a need for comprehensive legal frameworks prioritizing the multifarious factors of rights that would guarantee well-being of family members towards alignment with human/women's rights standards that would address issues like abuse in marriages, and continuous debates and reforms to ensure equality and alignment with modern legal standards (Sezgin, 2023)

2.3. Highlighting Predictive Factors of Reform in Muslim Family Laws

This part tries to investigate specific factors that predicted reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries which are: Gender identity rights; freedom rights; economic rights; political rights; health rights and social rights. Each of these factors are elaborated in the subsequent sub-headings.

First, gender identity rights in Muslim family laws have been a topic of discussion and reform efforts in various Muslim-majority countries. Efforts to promote gender equality and address issues like

domestic violence within Islamic family law have been highlighted as crucial steps towards creating harmonious and equal family structures as literature contends (Blitt, 2018). While traditional Islamic jurisprudence has often assigned different roles and responsibilities to men and women within the family, recent reforms have aimed at enhancing women's rights through changes in marriage, divorce, and custody laws as literature posits (Chase, 2016; Jenkins, 2018). The ongoing discussions and reforms in Islamic family laws reflect a growing recognition of the importance of gender equality and the need to address gender discrimination within family structures (Castro-Peraza et al, 2019). Enforcing gender identity rights in Muslim family laws carries significant legal and social implications whereby legal reforms in countries like Morocco have aimed to guarantee women's rights within the framework of Islamic law, reflecting a balance between Islamic rules and international conventions (Larsen, Vogt, Moe and Mir-Hosseini, 2013). However, challenges persist due to gender biases in most Muslim countries, leading to gender inequality issues that particularly affect women and children (Hu, 2020). In post-colonial Middle Eastern and North African states, the codification of Muslim family law has been a crucial aspect of state-building, with ongoing debates between conservative critics and state feminists regarding divorce laws and gender equality as literature contends (Vásquez, McMahon, Murphy and Schneider, 2020). Addressing these complexities requires a nuanced approach that balances religious traditions, gender equality, and societal cohesion. Islamic feminist organizations, such as Sisters in Islam (SIS), have emerged in nations like Malaysia to combat gender disparity by reinterpreting Islamic texts and providing legal aid across various domains (Mir-Hosseini, 2013; Chua, 2015).

Second, freedom rights in family law encompass the evolving concepts of autonomy, property rights, and the protection of individual choices within familial relationships. The clash between the libertarian vision of autonomy as property rights and the imperative to privatize dependency highlights doctrinal challenges in modern family law (Chaudhary, 2021). As social dynamics rapidly change, legal systems must adapt to protect autonomy while regulating family circumstances effectively (Slezkine, 2014; Majid, 2017). The European Court of Human Rights emphasizes the importance of family life, including same-sex partnerships and the best interests of the child, shaping family law principles and practices (Şener,

2021; Alfredsson and Eide, 2023). Additionally, the quest for gender equality within the family, inherent in human rights agendas, challenges patriarchal norms entrenched in monotheistic religions. Balancing individual freedoms with familial obligations remains a complex yet crucial aspect of contemporary family law (Jones, 2020; Sezgin, 2023). Efforts to secure its endorsement by the United Nations Human Rights Council faced opposition due to perceived inconsistencies with the UDHR, particularly from progressive Muslim factions (Majid, 2017; Şener, 2021; Alfredsson and Eide, 2023). Detractors of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights (CDHR) criticize it as a ploy and insincerity, aiming to diminish, if not eradicate entirely, the civil and political rights safeguarded by global treaties and striving to sidestep fundamental principles of freedom and equality (Mozaffari, 2024).

Third, Islamic family laws ensure that women have economic rights such as alimony, inheritance, mahr, and the right to residence, which are guaranteed by law and not subject to violation or revocation. These rights are rooted in the Islamic perspective that recognizes the natural abilities of both men and women, assigning them unique roles in society while ensuring their rights to financial stability and involvement in economic growth (Gezer, 2020; Bjørnskov, 2024). Additionally, Islamic family law addresses the financial support of divorced women and their children, safeguarding their rights to financial maintenance post-divorce through provisions like iddah maintenance, mut'ah, arrears of maintenance, and child maintenance, which have historical significance in pre- and post-colonial Muslim societies (Abdullah, Monsoor, Johari, and Mohd Radzi, 2015). More specifically, an emphasis on rights of women to heritage can be guaranteed economic empowerment as well (Haque, Solihin, Ahmad, and Jani, 2020). In various OIC countries, Islamic banking financing is also utilized to enhance family economic independence and prosperity, promoting halal businesses that align with Islamic law principles (Mahaini, Noordin and Mohamad, 2019; Organization of Muslim Cooperation, 2021).

Fourth, political rights guaranteed in Muslim family laws encompass various aspects such as the protection of married women's right to maintenance, the enactment of legislation ensuring women's rights through the application of Islamic law, and the provision of alimony for relatives as a form of social protection and solidarity in society (Morse and Engle, 2020). Additionally, the concept of iddah for husbands, although not commonly discussed, is

crucial in promoting gender equality and justice within Islamic legal traditions (Mahaini, Noordin and Mohamad, 2019). These rights are deeply rooted in Islamic principles, emphasizing the importance of family cohesion, social justice, and gender equality within the framework of Islamic law as part of effort to address issues relating to global Muslim rights (Organization of Muslim Cooperation, 2021). By guaranteeing these political rights, Muslim family laws aim to uphold the values of compassion, support, and fairness within the family unit and broader society.

Fifth, reform of health rights in Muslim Family Laws has been a significant focus in various Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries. The reform efforts aim to address the demands of the times and elevate the status of women by protecting their rights, including the right to obtain psychological and mental health, maintain reproductive health, and have equal opportunities have been culminated factors in advocating for labour force participation in OIC countries (Al-Huda, 2008; Sajjad and Chani, 2018). These reforms have been part of broader legislative changes to improve the status of women and children under Muslim Family Laws, with different countries prioritizing various types of reforms such as substantive changes or exit rights as part of effort to enforce natural rights (Chougule and Baweja, 2020). Family law reform in Muslim countries has shown a process of modernization from above, aiming to administer various aspects of society, including health rights, through legal frameworks for dispute resolution (Kamaruddin, Oseni and Manaf, 2021). Additionally, procedural law reforms have been utilized to curtail men's divorce prerogatives and constrain polygyny, ultimately increasing judicial oversight and state control over family matters, and literature identifies that domestic violence can indirectly impacts health of family members (Alfitri, 2020).

Sixth, reforming social rights in Muslim Family Laws can have significant implications for gender equality and women's rights. Studies show that OIC countries have undertaken legislative reforms to improve the status of women and children under Muslim Family Laws, with varying priorities pertaining to substantive reforms (Larsen, Vogt, Moe and Mir-Hosseini, 2013; Blitt, 2018; Morse and Engle, 2020). Efforts to build gender equality in Islamic law against domestic violence emphasize the need for reform to establish harmonious families with gender equality, challenging patriarchal cultures within the social setting (Mir-Hosseini, 2013). Family law reforms in Indonesia and Malaysia have aimed to

provide more equal positions and rights for Muslim women, although further improvements are needed to fully protect women's rights and ensure just laws (Chase, 2016; Castro-Peraza et al, 2019). Recent trends in Muslim family law reform have focused on enhancing women's rights through reforms in children's rights, particularly in the area of custody, aiming to combat discrimination against women and promote gender equality (Voss, 2014; Blitt, 2018; Castro-Peraza et al, 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach utilized in this research is survey research design. Literature such as Creswell (2014) regards survey design as an appropriate method of collecting data from a large population of the study. The population of this study involves selected countries in OIC countries in Asia and Africa namely: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia. The justification for selection of the aforementioned countries is similar due to the challenges involved in Muslim family laws as well as advocacy for the reforms of Muslim family laws in OIC countries. The sample of the study comprised 25 from each country totalling 350 respondents. The instrument used for this study involved self-designed questionnaire through the exploration of relevant literature. The study utilized a 4-likert scale namely: 4=strongly agree (SD); 3= Agree (A); 2= Disagree (D) and 1=Strongly Disagree (SD). There are five parameters used to measure each variable of the study as follows: Gender identity rights (GIR)= (5 items); Freedom rights (FRR) = (5 items); Economic rights (ECR)= (5 items); Political rights (POR)= (5 items); health rights (HLR)= (5 items) and social rights (SCR)= (5 items). This means that there are 30 items for measuring 6 factors in predicting factors of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries. Moreso, validity of the instrument was carried out through experts' opinions on various items whereby necessary modifications were made to ascertain that the items measured the variables of the study. Also, reliability of the instrument was done by reporting the international consistency of the instrument through the report of Cronbach's Alpha as follows: Muslim law reform (MLR)=.776; Gender identity rights (GIR)=.868; Freedom rights (FRR)=.888; Economic rights (ECR)=.721; Political rights (POR).546=; health rights (HLR)=.680 and social rights (SCR)=.866. The reliability has indicated that all the factors are excellent and reliable except with political rights and health rights that

demonstrated fairness in reliability. Reiteratively, in order to collect data from the target respondents; online questionnaire was used through various platforms accessible to the experts and stakeholders in Muslim family laws in selected OIC countries that are acquainted with the vital importance of advocacy for the reform of Muslim family laws in the contemporary world. An attempt was made to analyse the collected data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; version 23.0). Demographic information of respondents was analysed using descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages. Then, multiple regression analysis (MRA) was employed to determine the most predictive factor of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries and various assumptions of MRA was taken into account. This study complements other studies on empirical investigation in Saudi Arabia (Tikendra, Upendra Abhishek, Asif Afzal, Muthu & Muneer 2021)

4. RESULTS

This section explains the overall results of the study. Undoubtedly, demographic information of the respondents demonstrated that the majority of the respondents (262 or 75%) were male while 88 or 25% were female. The majority (162 or 46%) were between 31 and 35 years old; 90 (26%) were between 25 and 30 years; 50 (14%) were between 36 and 40 years while just only 48 were 41 and above. Concerning the respondents' disciplines, the majority (120 or 34%) had background in family law; 107 (31%) in legal discipline; 86 (25%) in Islamic law while only 37 (11%) in other disciplines. Regarding the respondents' marital status, the majority (224 or 64%) were married while only 126 (36%) were single. Pertaining to the respondents' educational qualification, 121 (35%) had masters degree; 97 (28%) had first degrees; 76 (22%) had Doctor of philosophy (PhD.) while just only 56 (16%) had other qualifications. The demographic information of the respondents has indicated that the respondents were qualified to answer the instrument of the study. The subsequent paragraph has provided answer to the research question that this study attempts to answer question thus: What are the predictive factors of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries?

In order to respond to the abovementioned research question, standard multiple regression analysis was utilised to determine the predictive factors in advocating for the reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries. Different assumptions were highlighted by the cursory literature such as Pallant

(2011) in connection with the use of multiple regression to determine the identified factors in predicting reform of family laws in OIC countries. Similarly, correlation among the identified variables were highlighted whereby a threshold of .7 was taken into consideration as literature posits (Pallant, 2011). The thresholds of correlations on various factors are: Muslim law reform (MLR)=.56; Gender identity rights (GIR)=.47; freedom rights (FRR)=.46; economic rights (ECR)=.67; political rights (POR)=.47; health rights (HLR)=.58; social rights (SCR)=.45; indicated that they were correlated in predicting reforms of Muslim family laws (MFLs) in OIC countries.

Furthermore, collinearity is another important assumption to be taken into consideration using coefficients by considering tolerance and VIF. In a situation whereby VIF is higher than .10 indicated higher multiple correlations among the variables being explored which also indicated that there was presence of multicollinearity. Hence, the following

are the values of tolerance for each of the set of variables explored in this study: Gender identity rights (GIR)=.72; freedom rights (FRR)=.86; economic rights (ECR)=.49; political rights (POR)=.62; health rights (HLR)=.18 and social rights (SCR) =.10. Thus, the values obtained for VIF as demonstrated in coefficients Table are above that of tolerance which indicated that there was no violation of the multicollinearity as literature suggests. Based on the said values, it could be inferred that there was no violation of multicollinearity as literature suggests (Pallant, 2011). Similarly, R-square was considered as an important determinant for the variance in the advocacy for Muslim family laws which is explicitly elaborated in the model summary of the factors explored in this study. Hence, 96.0% is the value of R-square obtained for variance in advocacy for Muslim family laws in OIC countries. The model summary as shown in Table 1 indicated that sample used for the study was appropriate.

Table 1: Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.978 ^a	.956	.955	.83789	1.817

- redictors: (Constant), SCRCOMP, ECRCOMP, PORCOMP, HLRCOMP, FRRCOMP
- Dependent Variable: MLRCOMP (Source: SPSS Data Output, 2024).

Moreover, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to further explore the variables of the study. Statistical significance (Sig=.000 which indicated $p < .005$ which was a demonstration that the multifarious factors adequately predicted reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries. More specifically, the most predictive factor of reform Muslim family laws in OIC countries was social rights (SCR) with largest coefficient of .787 while freedom rights received lowest beta value .005 in standardised coefficients, as shown in the coefficients Table 2. Similarly, health rights with beta value of .167 also performed better in predicting the reforms of Muslim family laws compared to political, freedom, economic and gender identity rights. It

should be reiterated that literature contends that negative sign in the beta threshold does not make any difference with positive sign while trying to interpret the standardized coefficients. Thus, it can be established that the most predictive factor of reform Muslim family laws in OIC was social right due to the fact that it has largest coefficients of beta value. This inferably means that OIC countries have been performing excellently through policies and legal frameworks in fostering family laws that strengthens the social and health rights of the family. Similarly, there is an improvement regarding the emphasis on the economic rights with the family in according with the provision of laws when compared with political, freedom and gender identity rights in OIC countries. Thereby, there is need to foster many aspects of the aforementioned factors explored in this study. Table 2 shows Coefficients of the study.

Table 2: Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Collinearity Statistics			
1	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.073	.228		.321	.749		
FRRCOMP	.004	.033	.005	.135	.893	.087	11.554
ECRCOMP	.097	.018	.088	5.466	.000	.510	1.961
HLRCOMP	.191	.030	.167	6.409	.000	.193	5.184
SCRCOMP	.697	.030	.787	22.956	.000	.111	8.973

Dependent Variable: MLRCOMP (Source: SPSS Data Output, 2024).

Nonetheless, there was lower value (.005) obtained for beta on the freedom rights factor. It is an indication that the factor does not make significant contribution to advocacy for the reform of Muslim family laws in OCI countries. In spite of the beta values obtained for higher and lower factors; other factors also contributed to the advocacy for reform Muslim family laws in OIC countries. Also, the normal probability plot (p-p) of regression standardised residual was taken into consideration and it was showed that there were no fundamental deviations from normality as shown in figure 1.

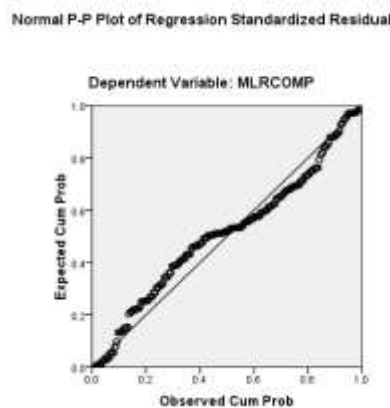


Figure 1: Normal Probability Plot (p-p) of Regression Standardised Residual (Source: SPSS Data Output, 2024)

In addition, the scatterplot did not show outliers due to the fact the Pallant (2011) said that the figures of scatterplot should not be more than 3.3 or less than -3.3 as shown in figures 1 and 2 respectively. Figure 2 shows the scatterplot.

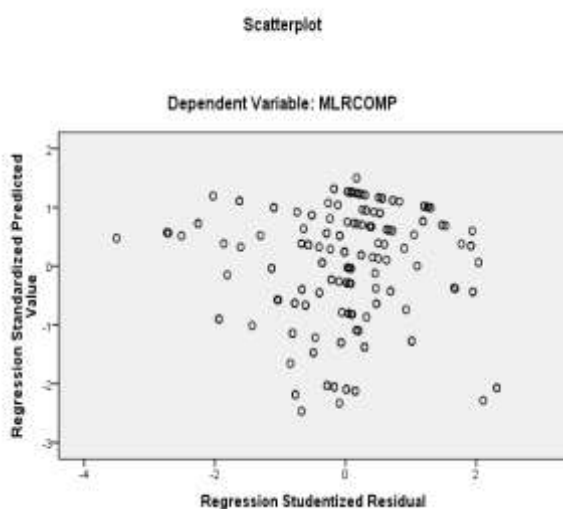


Figure 2: Scatterplot (Source: SPSS Data Output, 2024).

4.1. Discussion of Findings

The fundamental objective of this study was to explore predictors of advocacy for reform of Muslim family laws in selected OIC countries in order to respond to multifarious problems facing different countries. The findings of this study provide an in-depth legal analysis for need for reform of Muslim family laws (MFLs) in predominant OIC countries of Asian and African continents. The findings of this in agreement with a number of studies that advocated for the revision of Muslim family laws due to the issues of discrimination and violence against women and girls in family matters (Castro-Peraza et al, 2019; Sezgin, 2023). The findings of this study have affirmed the significance of gender equality which is in agreement with cursory literature that posited that the discussion surrounding the notion of gender equality, particularly within the family framework, is recognized in global law (Negrón-Gonzales, 2015; Kayaoglu, 2015; Petersen and Kayaoglu, 2019; Welchman, Jouriou and Sharafeldin, 2023). However, personal laws on marital affairs, divorce, asset allocation, inheritance, adoption, and related matters in various OIC nations are either not protected by constitutional safeguards against discrimination or fall under the authority of the nation's ethnic and religious groups (Sezgin, 2017; Siddiqui, 2023).

The findings of this study have posited that the reform of Muslim Family Laws has emerged as a significant focal point in predominant Muslim-majority countries which Muslim-minority countries can also learn through their legislative revisions geared towards advancing the rights of women and the legal framework within these systems. This is in agreement cursory literature that affirmed that Muslim-majority nations have generally emphasized substantial transformations within the context of family law reform (Shaikh, 2020; Chaudhary, 2021). Other studies have noted that revisions in family law within Muslim-majority countries have often entailed procedural adjustments to augment state oversight over familial affairs, particularly in domains such as divorce and polygyny, without fundamentally reshaping Islamic family law precepts (Monshipouri and Kayaoglu, 2019). Furthermore, the findings of this study are contrary to previous studies that noted that comparative analyses have illustrated disparities in the adoption of Islamic jurisprudence and Western legal norms across nations like Syria, Sudan, Turkey, and Indonesia, reflecting a spectrum of approaches to legal reform in the Muslim domain as literature contends (Shaikh, 2020).

Nonetheless, the advocacy for reforms in Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) according to the findings of this

study have established that they had varying impacts on the rights of women and children. This is in consonance with a number of studies that affirmed that Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries have undertaken legislative reforms to improve women's and children's rights within their MFL systems (Haque, Chowdhury, Ahmad and Rakibuddin, 2020). Studies have further demonstrated that the advocacy for reforms have aimed to ensure that religious laws on family affairs are not contradictory to fundamental human rights, and consequently increase accountability, and strengthen the rule of law within MFL systems (De Cruz, 2010; Cherif, 2010; Graycar, 2013).

The findings of this study have further emphasized the importance of efforts to reform family laws in Muslim-majority nations including OIC countries have been directed to foster the impacts of religious regulations on general human rights in order to reinforce the legal framework within their systems which can further strengthen MFLs. This is in agreement in many studies that posited that procedural law adjustments have been employed in several Muslim-majority nations to introduce modifications without directly challenging substantive Islamic family laws, particularly in areas like divorce rights and limitations on polygyny (Haque, Chowdhury, Ahmad and Rakibuddin, 2020; Taskhiri, 2024). Moreover, the configuration of legal systems, influenced by colonial regulations, significantly influences the approach to family law reforms in Muslim-majority nations like Morocco and Jordan as literature contends (Majid, 2017; Chaudhary, 2021).

Moreover, this study has reiterated the significance of social rights as the most predictive measure of reform of MFLs in OIC countries. This is in agreement with cursory literature the reformation of social rights within Muslim Family Laws can yield substantial implications for the advancement of gender equality and women's rights (Larsen, Vogt, Moe and Mir-Hosseini, 2013; Blitt, 2018; Morse and Engle, 2020). Research further indicates that Muslim-majority nations have engaged in legislative transformations to enhance the status of women and children under Muslim Family Laws, with diverse focuses such as exit rights and substantial reforms (Mir-Hosseini, 2013). Initiatives aimed at fostering gender equality within Islamic law concerning domestic violence underscore the necessity for reform to establish harmonious family structures characterized by social norms, thereby challenging prevailing patriarchal norms. While family law revisions in Indonesia and Malaysia have strived to

confer more equitable positions and rights upon Muslim women, further enhancements are required to effectively safeguard women's rights and ensure the enactment of equitable laws (Chase, 2016; Castro-Peraza et al, 2019). Recent developments in reforming Muslim family law have concentrated on bolstering women's social rights through enhancements in children's rights, especially in the realm of custody, with the objective of combating gender discrimination against women and fostering gender parity and the provision of equal opportunities as literature contends (Voss, 2014; Blitt, 2018; Castro-Peraza et al, 2019). Thus, literature posits that the application of Islamic financial instruments can contribute to reduction of poverty and sustainable households (Amuda and Elshaarawy, 2024).

Furthermore, this study has buttressed the significance of health rights as corroboration to the predictive factor of reform of MFLs in OIC countries. This is in affirmation with the reformation of health rights enshrined in Muslim Family Laws has emerged as a pivotal focal point in numerous Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority nations (Al-Huda, 2008; Sajjad and Chani, 2018). Thus, these reform endeavours seek to respond to contemporary demands and elevate the status of women by safeguarding their rights, encompassing aspects like access to psychological and mental health services and the preservation of reproductive health (Chougule and Baweja, 2020). The evolution of family law in Muslim societies reflects a top-down modernization process, seeking to regulate diverse facets of society, including health rights, via legal frameworks (Kamaruddin, Oseni and Manaf, 2021).

Also, this study has attested to the fact the economic rights in MFLs would guarantee positive attention to the welfare of the family. This position is in consonance with the cursory studies that established that the Islamic family laws guarantee women economic rights such as alimony, inheritance, mahr, and the right to residence, which are legally protected and inviolable as literature contends (Gezer, 2020; Bjørnskov, 2024). These rights are grounded in the Islamic perspective acknowledging the inherent capabilities of both men and women, assigning them distinct roles in society while ensuring their entitlement to financial stability and participation in economic progress (Abdullah, Monsoor, Johari, and Mohd Radzi, 2015). It is noteworthy to assert that literature contends that Islamic banking mechanisms are also leveraged to bolster family economic autonomy and prosperity, fostering halal enterprises that adhere to Islamic law

principles as literature posits (Haq, Solihin, Ahmad, and Jani, 2020). Additionally, Islamic family law according to the findings of this study addresses the financial maintenance of divorced women and their offspring, safeguarding their post-divorce financial rights through provisions like *iddah* maintenance, *mut'ah*, arrears of maintenance, and child maintenance in Muslim communities as literature contends (Mahaini, Noordin and Mohamad, 2019; Organization of Muslim Cooperation, 2021).

Onwards, freedom rights have been confirmed as an integral part of factor necessary for the reform of MFLs in OIC countries. However, it needs meticulous attention in the reform process. This is why literature contends that the rights to freedom in family law encompass the evolving notions of autonomy, property rights, and safeguarding individual choices within familial relationships (Slezkine, 2014; Majid, 2017; Chaudhary, 2021). Nevertheless, the conflict between the libertarian perspective of autonomy as property rights and the necessity to privatize dependency underscores doctrinal hurdles in contemporary family law. As societal dynamics undergo rapid transformations, legal frameworks must evolve to preserve autonomy while effectively regulating family circumstances as literature posits (Şener, 2021; Alfredsson and Eide, 2023). The European Court of Human Rights underscores the significance of family life and the welfare of the child, influencing family law principles and procedures. Striking a balance between individual liberties and familial responsibilities persists as a complex yet pivotal facet of modern family law (Jones, 2020; Sezgin, 2023). Efforts to gain approval from the United Nations Human Rights Council encountered opposition due to perceived incongruities with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably from progressive Muslim factions (Majid, 2017; Şener, 2021; Alfredsson and Eide, 2023). Critics of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights (CDHR) condemn it as a tactic devoid of sincerity, aiming to diminish, if not entirely eliminate, the civil and political rights protected by global treaties and seeking to circumvent fundamental principles of freedom and equality (Mozaffari, 2024).

Moreover, the political rights investigated in this study has shown that it needs a serious attention to be more strengthened in MFLs. This is in agreement with a number of studies that posited that political rights guaranteed in Muslim family laws encompass various dimensions such as safeguarding the right to maintenance for married women, enacting laws that

ensure women's rights through the application of Islamic law, and providing alimony for relatives as a means of social protection and solidarity in society (Mahaini, Noordin and Mohamad, 2019; Morse and Engle, 2020). By upholding these political rights, Muslim family laws aim to uphold values of compassion, support, and fairness within the family unit and wider society.

Similarly, this study has examined gender identity as an integral part of reform of MFLs. This is not significantly contributed to advocacy for the reform of MFLs compared to the other factors. Literature has affirmed that the rights pertaining to gender identity in Muslim family laws have been a subject of discourse and reform endeavors in several Muslim-majority nations (Chase, 2016; Jenkins, 2018; Blitt, 2018;). Studies have further buttressed that initiatives to advance gender equality and address issues like domestic violence within Islamic family law have been underscored as essential steps towards establishing harmonious and equitable family structures (Cimas, 2011; Castro-Peraza et al, 2019). The enforcement of gender identity rights in Muslim family laws presents substantial legal and social ramifications. Legal transformations in nations such as Morocco have sought to ensure the rights of women under the Islamic legal system, demonstrating a harmonious coexistence between Islamic principles and global treaties (Larsen, Vogt, Moe and Mir-Hosseini, 2013). Nevertheless, obstacles endure due to gender prejudices embedded in Islamic legislations, resulting in issues of gender disparity that predominantly impact women and minors (Hu, 2020). Dealing with these intricacies necessitates a sophisticated approach that reconciles religious customs, gender equity, and communal unity. Moreover, the pursuit of gender equality within the family, inherent in human rights agendas, challenges entrenched patriarchal norms in OIC countries (Chaudhary, 2021). The ongoing dialogues and reforms in Islamic family laws signify an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of gender equality and the imperative to tackle gender bias within family frameworks. Additionally, the concept of *iddah* for husbands, though often overlooked, plays a vital role in promoting gender equality and justice within Islamic legal traditions as literature explains (Majid, 2017; Jones, 2020; Sezgin, 2023). These rights are deeply rooted in Islamic principles, emphasizing the significance of family unity, social justice, and gender equality within the Islamic legal framework. In a nutshell, the study has validated the measures of reforms of MFLs in OIC countries.

4.2. Implications of the Study

This study has stressed on the significance of changes introduced through procedural law of MFLs which have potential to enhance judicial oversight over family matters in OIC countries. Enforcing reforms in Muslim family laws has significant implications on various aspects of society. The reforms aim to improve the status of women and children, enhance human rights compliance, strengthen the rule of law, and address issues like divorce prerogatives, polygyny constraints, and inheritance rights. These reforms reflect a shift towards more egalitarian principles, challenging traditional gender roles and promoting justice and equality for all individuals, regardless of sex or social class. The changes in family laws also highlight the evolution of the Muslim family system from extended to nuclear families, emphasizing the rights of spouses and descendants within this new framework. By prioritizing different types of legislative reform, Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries are adapting to modern realities while considering factors like colonial heritage, state-religion relations, and women's activism.

In so doing, issues like divorce prerogatives, polygyny constraints, and guardianship rights would be addressed with utmost legal frameworks. In addition, some reforms with patriarchal interpretations of religious law codes have been shown to potentially foster different rights highlighted in this study which can positively impact on women and children's wellbeing through factors like social, health, political and economic investments. Such reforms form part of broader legislative shifts aimed at ameliorating the status of women and children under Muslim Family Laws, with different countries prioritizing distinct forms of reforms such as substantive alterations. Moreover, procedural law reforms have been employed to curtail men's unilateral divorce prerogatives and restrict polygyny, ultimately enhancing judicial oversight and state intervention in family affairs, thereby indirectly influencing health rights within families.

In the Human Freedom Index 2019, an analysis is presented demonstrating the rankings of countries in terms of personal and economic freedom compared to the global average and among themselves. The concept of freedom is comprehensive and can be assessed across multiple dimensions. More specifically, this study has explored the concept and an emphasis is given on personal freedom, particularly examining the various aspects within the broader categories outlined in the Human Freedom

Index 2019. Thus, these include the rule of law, security and safety, freedoms pertaining to movement, religion, association, assembly, civil society, expression, information, as well as freedom in the context of identity and relationships. While economic freedom is also considered, it also evaluated in this study.

This study has buttressed the advocacy of different instruments such as International human rights instruments, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Hence, the aforementioned instruments play a crucial role in shaping reforms in Muslim Family Laws by promoting gender equality. These instruments provide a framework for evaluating existing laws and practices to ensure they align with international standards of human rights and gender equality. By comparing Islamic Family Law with CEDAW principles, scholars have highlighted the importance of legal reforms to enhance women's rights, challenge discriminatory practices, and foster gender-sensitive decision-making within Islamic courts. The potential benefits of such reforms include granting women greater autonomy, protection against gender-based violence, and improved access to justice, ultimately advancing gender equality within Muslim-majority societies. Additionally, the intersectional approach advocated by these instruments emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts and inclusive dialogue among various stakeholders to promote feminist justice and safeguard women's rights within Islamic legal frameworks. The reform MFL have introduced concepts like the best interests of the child to determine custody arrangements, moving away from rigid gender-based rules towards a more flexible and rights-based approach that considers the welfare of all members of the family.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has empirically investigated the paramount importance of the need for reform of Muslim family laws (MFLs) in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries. More importantly, several issues regarding the perceived importability of OIC's human rights and United Nations' human rights have been elucidated. Nonetheless, the paper has extensively explained the multifarious predictive factors of reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries. The paper has established that social rights and health rights predicted necessity for reform of Muslim family laws in OIC countries compared to other factors such as: gender identity rights, freedom rights, political rights

and economic rights as investigated in this paper. Thus, the application of Islamic legal norms in family law, as seen in this study, can strengthen family norms and legal principles, necessitating careful consideration for protection of standards entrenched in Muslim family laws as against the discourse of loose usage of secular human rights of which their tenets are contrary to the principles of Islamic legal system in OIC countries. This study is not without limitation and the limitation lies in selecting only 14 OIC countries in Asia and Africa in exploring the measures of reform of Muslim family laws (MFLs). Nonetheless, the study has established significance of essential rights that need to be strengthened in MFLs and it has provided substantial direction for future studies in utilizing empirical studies for fostering MFLs in predominant Muslim countries in general and Muslim minority countries in particular. This advocacy for the reforms of MFLs have sought to enhance women's rights through modifications in marriage, divorce, and custody regulations. These reforms have given emphasis to ascertain for a more adaptable and rights-oriented approach that considers the well-being of all involved parties. Therefore, the following recommendations are made based on the overall findings of the study:

1. That the Muslim family law in various OIC countries needs modification that can improve gender identity rights, freedom rights, political rights and health rights in order to substantially contribute to different components of reform of Muslim family law investigated in this study.
2. It is paramount to put forward a set of legal initiatives for amending Muslim family laws that discriminate against Muslim women and

girls in various OIC countries.

3. It is essential to promote and bolster the reform of family and personal laws that guarantee the rights of Muslim women and girls in OIC countries.
4. Muslim-minority countries can learn from Muslim-majority countries through the revisions of their legal framework which should be geared towards advancing the multifarious rights embodied in Muslim family laws (MFLs).
5. By strengthening the reform of Muslim family law, family matters, affecting issues like divorce prerogatives, polygyny constraints, and guardianship rights would be effectively addressed.
6. Through the reform of Muslim family law, procedural law would meaningfully increase judicial oversight and state control over several family matters in OIC countries.
7. Efforts to curb harmful practices like child marriage through reform of Muslim law frameworks could be utilized to advance children's rights in OIC countries.

Future research should explore the potential impact of these rights frameworks in broader Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries, as well as examine how intergovernmental organizations like the OIC can further influence MFL reforms through collaborative efforts. Additionally, a deeper analysis of the legal mechanisms behind gender identity and freedom rights within MFL reforms could provide valuable insights into advancing gender equality across diverse Muslim contexts.

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