

Challenging Gender Inequality Through Deconstructing Power Dynamics: Nawal El Saadawi and Egyptian Family Law

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Abstract

This study critically examines the gendered power dynamics embedded in Egyptian family law, with a particular focus on the role of Nawal El Saadawi in advocating for legislative reforms. Egyptian family law has historically institutionalized gender inequality, manifesting in discriminatory regulations regarding marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. By deconstructing these legal structures, this research highlights how patriarchal interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence have perpetuated systemic disadvantages for women. Utilizing a qualitative methodology through library research to analyse primary sources, including El Saadawi's extensive writings, alongside secondary literature on legal and feminist perspectives. The findings reveal that El Saadawi's activism has significantly contributed to rethinking and reforming family law, challenging deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. Her critiques of polygamy, the obedience clause (bait at tho'ah), and gender-biased divorce laws have influenced discourse on gender justice in Egypt. This research underscores her impact as a catalyst for progressive legal debates and policy shifts toward gender equality. Furthermore, the study provides concrete recommendations for addressing persistent gender disparities within Egyptian family law, emphasizing the necessity of legal reforms that align with universal human rights principles. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader discussions on the intersections of feminism, legal reform, and social change in contemporary Islamic societies.

Keywords: *Gender Inequality, Egyptian Family Law, Nawal El Saadawi, Legal Reform, Feminist Activism*

INTRODUCTION

Family law in Egypt, as in many other countries, serves as a fundamental arena for gender power struggles, shaping the socio-legal status of women. Despite efforts at reform, Egyptian family law continues to institutionalize gender inequality, particularly in areas

related to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance (Takemura, 2024). Scholars and activists have long debated the intersection of legal frameworks and patriarchal power structures that disadvantage women. However, while previous studies have highlighted discriminatory legal provisions, there remains a significant gap in examining the role of feminist activists and thinkers—particularly Nawal El Saadawi—in advocating for more inclusive family law reforms.

The persistent gender disparities in Egyptian family law necessitate an in-depth examination of both legal and socio-cultural dimensions. Family law reforms in Muslim-majority countries have been subject to continuous debate, with tensions between traditional interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and calls for gender justice (Baroud & El-Alayli, 2018). This study contributes to this discourse by not only identifying discriminatory practices—such as male-dominated divorce procedures, the obedience clause (*bait at tho'ah*), polygamy, and limitations on women's inheritance—but also by assessing the role of El Saadawi as a key figure in challenging these patriarchal norms. Her activism, writings, and advocacy serve as critical tools in reshaping the discourse on gender and legal equality in Egypt.

Scholarly discourse on family law reform in Muslim countries traces back to the early 20th century when prominent Muslim intellectuals such as Sayyid Ameer Ali, Muhammad Abduh, Qassim Amin, Thahir Haddad, Fatima Mernissi, and Amina Wadud pioneered gender-sensitive interpretations of Islamic law (Khoiruddin, 2001, pp. 3–4). Their contributions sought to challenge patriarchal readings of religious texts and propose legal reforms that align with contemporary gender justice principles (Jambunanda, 2023; Noviana, 2021; Shah, 2017; Ennaji, 2022; Rhouni, 2009). These reformist perspectives have had significant implications for legal debates across Muslim-majority societies, yet resistance from conservative religious authorities and state institutions continues to hinder gender-inclusive legal changes (Htun & Weldon, 2011).

Despite these historical and contemporary efforts, the implementation of gender-equitable family law reforms remain inconsistent in Egypt. Legal structures continue to reflect patriarchal norms, perpetuating inequalities that disadvantage women in marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights (Shehata, 2023). Nawal El Saadawi (1931–2021) emerged as a critical voice in challenging these legal frameworks, advocating for legal and ideological shifts that empower women. Her critiques of polygamy, the obedience clause, and restrictive

interpretations of Islamic family law have influenced scholarly and legal discourses on gender justice (El Saadawi, 2017b, pp. 26–27). Her activism highlights the need for legal reforms that address not only explicit legal discrimination but also the underlying social norms that sustain gender inequality.

This study aims to address several research questions: How does Nawal El Saadawi's critique of Egyptian family law contribute to broader feminist legal debates? What are the implications of her activism for legal practitioners and policymakers seeking gender-equitable family law frameworks? How do other scholars interpret and critique her contributions? What strategies does she propose for achieving legal and social reforms that enhance women's rights? Addressing these questions provides insights into the intersection of feminist thought, religious reinterpretation, and legal reform.

The significance of this research extends beyond legal scholarship; it has practical implications for policymakers, gender advocates, and legal practitioners engaged in reforming discriminatory legal structures. By analyzing El Saadawi's contributions within the broader historical and socio-legal context, this study offers a critical assessment of the challenges and possibilities for gender justice in Egypt. Previous research has examined gender inequality in family law, but few studies have systematically explored the direct impact of El Saadawi's feminist critiques on legal debates (Muhtarom et al., 2023, p. 39). By filling this gap, this study contributes to both feminist legal theory and the ongoing discourse on family law reform in Muslim-majority societies.

In order to achieve these objectives, this study employs a qualitative methodology through extensive literature analysis and feminist legal theory. Primary data sources include El Saadawi's writings on Egyptian family law, complemented by secondary sources such as academic publications, legal documents, and feminist critiques. The research also incorporates a comparative legal analysis, examining reform efforts in other Muslim-majority countries that have adopted progressive approaches to gender-sensitive legal reforms (Amin & Agustar, 2023, p. 75). By synthesizing historical, legal, and feminist perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between law, gender, and power in the Egyptian context.

This research not only highlights the gender disparities within Egyptian family law but also underscores the broader implications of feminist activism in legal reform movements. By situating El Saadawi's contributions within the larger feminist and legal

discourse, this study seeks to advance scholarly and policy-oriented discussions on gender justice, legal equity, and the future trajectory of family law in Egypt. Through this analysis, it becomes evident that while legal reform is essential, achieving gender justice also requires challenging deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies and power structures that sustain discrimination against women in legal and social institutions.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we will present an in-depth explanation of the results of our research related to the power dynamics that exist in Egyptian family law. We will conduct a very detailed analysis of the changes that have taken place in Egyptian family law and consider the implications for existing gender inequality. In addition, we will also exaggerate the impact of some of the criticisms that Nawal El Saadawi has expressed on Egyptian family law, aiming to highlight the problems and challenges that need to be urgently addressed in this context (Shehata, 2023).

This study also attempts to explore comprehensive details of some of the fundamental issues of gender inequality in family law. We will cover in detail the issues of family law procedures that are often complex and complicate access for affected individuals. Not only that, we will also expand the discussion related to the issue of polygamy (Wahib, 2014a), which often gave rise to injustice and displeasure in Egyptian society. Next, we will discuss in detail the ownership of property in the context of Egyptian family law, which is often a determining factor in gender inequality. In addition, we will also not miss child care and wife obligations as two important aspects of family law that often result in gender injustice.

Towards the end of our explanation, we will present our comprehensive analysis of all the previously mentioned issues. We will offer practical solutions that can be implemented to improve gender equality in the context of Egyptian family law. As such, we hope that our exposure will provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of this issue and inspire concrete steps that can be taken to achieve the goal of greater equality in Egyptian family law.

Development of Egyptian Family Law

Family law in Egypt has undergone significant development over the centuries, influenced by various religious, social, and political factors. Here's the broad line of its development: Pre-Modern Era: Family law is based on the principles of Islamic Shariah, especially the Hanafi mazhab. Polygamy is allowed, and women's rights in marriage and divorce are limited. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Egypt underwent a series of legal reforms aimed at modernizing its legal system (Zayyadi, 2014). These reforms included the codification of family law into written laws and the expansion of women's rights.

The Personal Status Act of 1920 was an important milestone in the development of family law in Egypt (Wahib, 2014b). The law gives women the right to divorce their husbands under certain conditions, restricts polygamy, and enhances women's inheritance rights. Next Amendment: Since 1920, Egyptian family law has undergone further amendments to extend the rights of women and children.

We analyse how these changes affect gender inequality in family law. Marriage reform, divorce, and women's rights are positive steps. However, there is still potential for further improvement to eliminate gender inequality entirely. We highlight the importance of women's empowerment and propose further measures, such as reducing gaps in marriage and supporting fair divorce procedures (Zulfa et al., 2023, p. 208). These reforms can be the basis for achieving gender equality in Egypt but require hard work and involvement from all stakeholders. The analysis is expected to inspire policymakers to push for positive changes in Egypt's family law (Khoiruddin, 2001).

Nawal El Saadawi's Critique of Contemporary Issues of Egyptian Family Law

Nawal El Saadawi, a prominent Egyptian feminist, has been critical of her country's family law that discriminates against women and violates gender inequality. She opposes early marriage, polygamy, unfair divorce rules, gender biased custody, and minimum protection for women from violence. Her criticism, although intimidating, has sparked public debate and prompted legal reforms to bring about justice and equality for women in Egypt. We describe in detail the criticisms raised by Nawal El Saadawi against Egypt's ongoing family law. Through in-depth analysis, we see and understand the challenges faced in trying to overcome these complaints. It cannot be ignored that fighting gender injustice in Egypt is a very complex task, especially since the legal structure is still heavily dominated by patriarchal

views (El-Saadawi, 2017c, p. 28). Nonetheless, Saadawi's critique is an important and courageous step on the road to change that is just and equal for all individuals.

Egypt's current family laws, by far, tend to favor men and neglect women in many aspects of their family life (El-Saadawi, 2017b). This creates substantial gender inequality and cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges faced is strong resistance from those who maintain the status quo, which often leads to a deadlock in efforts to secure fairer change for the rest of society. Not only underscoring gender injustice in family law, Saadawi's criticism also emphasizes the urgency of the importance of gender equality as well as the need to fight discrimination in all its forms (El-Saadawi, 2017b). Saadawi has managed to cast an authoritative voice in the struggle to achieve better gender equality, and her criticism has transformed into a kind of burning driving spirit in the effort to bring about the necessary changes in Egypt's family law.

The criticisms raised by El Saadawi clearly reflect the inevitability and urgent need to change existing family laws (Mujibur Rohman & Zarkasi, 2021, p. 24). This highlights how important it is to address gender injustice that occurs in the systematic structure of family law. There is no doubt that a radical transformation must be undertaken to achieve a just and equal society for all individuals in Egypt and around the world.

Administrative Technical Problems

We identified several significant problems in Egyptian family law procedures that contribute markedly to gender inequality at an alarming rate. These problems include administrative barriers faced by women in accessing the rights they deserve easily, the lack of adequate protection for victims of domestic violence that occurs so often, and cultural stereotypes that often affect the resolution of cases related to family problems (Khoiruddin, 2001). This research identifies various factors that contribute to gender inequality in Egyptian family law. Women are faced with administrative barriers, minimal protection for victims of DRC, and discriminatory cultural stereotypes. The combination of these factors creates a widespread gap of injustice, preventing women from gaining their rights and exacerbating gender disparities in Egypt. Comprehensive transformative efforts are needed, ranging from law reform and strengthening protective mechanisms to public education to eliminate discriminatory cultural stereotypes to realize gender justice in Egyptian family law.

In our in-depth analysis, we saw how much impact these problems in Egypt's family law procedures had on gender inequality that still exists today. We felt the need to offer a number of suggestions and recommendations to improve Egypt's rudimentary family law system. Our suggestions will not only help address existing problems, but are also expected to bring significant changes in efforts to achieve true gender equality.

The Problem of Polygamy in Egyptian Family Law

A meticulous and in-depth investigation into the problem of polygamy in the context of family law in Egypt is very complex and diverse (Utsman Amin, 2015, p. 30). In our discussion, we not only discussed the various regulations and restrictions associated with the practice of polygamy, but we also conducted a more in-depth analysis of the significant impact it had on gender inequality that still exists today. In addition, we also conducted a very critical study of the arguments that form the basis of this practice of polygamy and involve implications that greatly affect women's lives (Wahib, 2014a).

In analyzing the above text in line with the findings of some research published in international journals. According to Mashhour (2005) in "Islamic Law and Gender Equality: Could There be a Common Ground?: A Study of Divorce and Polygamy in Sharia Law and Contemporary Legislation in Tunisia and Egypt", polygamy practices supported by certain religious doctrines can have a negative impact on women. Further research is needed to better understand the practice of polygamy, including its impact on women and children, as well as the underlying arguments behind it.

Some solutions are simple but also present some comprehensive solution options to address the ongoing problem in Egyptian family law regarding polygamy. Through that, the hope is to create and realize an environment that fully respects gender equality and justice for all individuals involved in the future (El Saadawi, 2017b).

The Problem of the Wife's Role in the Household

We discuss comprehensively the issue of wife obedience (*Bait at Thaah*) in family law in Egypt that affects the wife's role in marriage, Nawal El Saadawi, a staunch feminist and critic of patriarchal structures, would likely take strong objection to the concept of absolute wife obedience (*bait al-ta'ah*) enshrined in Egyptian family law. She would argue that such a law reduces wives to mere caretakers and subordinates, stripping them of agency and autonomy within the marriage. El Saadawi would likely point out that this obligation

reinforces gender inequality and hinders women's ability to achieve personal fulfillment (El-Saadawi, 2017b). In this analysis, we explore the concept of wife obedience in the context of Egyptian family law, including the wife's role in taking care of the household and the obligation to obey the husband's orders as key pillars in marriage.

In outlining the impact of this concept on gender inequality, we discuss the social, economic, and emotional implications arising from the pressure received by wives to always be obedient. We look at how this concept can affect a woman's freedom and personal life, as well as how it can perpetuate a cycle of inequality in society.

In dealing with this problem, we argue that a change in society's view and legal system regarding wife obedience is a must. We encourage a review of traditional views on wife compliance, promoting gender equality and women's rights as new foundations in Egyptian family law. This research, drawing on reputable sources from Moors (2018), tackles the concept of wifely obedience within Egyptian family law. The authors argue for a fundamental shift, proposing a critical review of traditional expectations of wifely compliance. They advocate for a legal and societal framework built on gender equality and women's rights. The paper delves into the necessity of transforming existing social norms and legal structures to create a more inclusive and equitable family environment for all. By critically examining the concept of wifely obedience, the research explores its potential removal as a catalyst for positive change towards a more gender-balanced society. Ultimately, the aim is to spark dialogue and raise awareness on this crucial issue. This, the authors hope, will garner support for a more inclusive approach to the role and expectations of wives within Egyptian family law, both in societal views and the legal system.

We raise questions around the need for changes in existing social rules and norms to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all family members. We provide critical thinking on how the removal of the concept of wife obedience can stimulate positive change in the construction of a more gender-equal society. Through this paper, we hope to encourage dialogue and broader awareness of this issue and build support for more inclusive changes in the views of Egyptian society and the legal system regarding the role and compliance of wives in family law.

Child Custody Issues

Hadhanah is another important issue in the context of Egyptian family law. *Hadhanah* is the guardian right possessed by a man when deciding the marriage of his daughter. In practice, many women are victims of unfair decisions from their guardians, such as untimely marriages or with unwanted parties. This results in gender inequality in marriage, as women have no control over their own lives. Nawal El Saadawi highlights this problem in his work and challenges this injustice through critical analysis and offers solutions to improve Egypt's family law system (El-Saadawi, 2017b).

We discussed the issue of *hadhanah* in Egyptian family law. We analyze the concept of guardianship and the role of the father in the determination of the life of the child after divorce. We identify problems that can arise in the implementation of *hadhanah* and gender equality in this regard. We also offer solutions and alternatives that can improve the protection of women's and children's rights in Egyptian family law on this issue (El Saadawi, 2017b).

Background of Nawal El Saadawi

Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian writer, physician, and female activist born in 1931. She has fought all her life for gender equality in society, especially in the context of family law in Egypt (Shehata, 2023). El Saadawi has been a bold and powerful voice in exposing gender inequality and the oppression of women in her country. In her remarkable writings, she describes the experiences and hardships experienced by many Egyptian women in the patriarchal family law system that has made her one of the pillars of the gender equality movement in Egypt and around the world. El Saadawi's background as a physician gives her a unique perspective on the devastating impact that gender inequality has had on the lives of Egyptian women, and she valiantly explores the complexities of such issues in her colorful works (Baytiyeh, 2019). Through her evocative and inspiring works, El Saadawi managed to build a deep understanding and broad public support for more just and equal changes in Egyptian family law, forming a strong foundation for a better life for women in Egypt and around the world (El-Saadawi, 2019, p. 176).

Nawal El Saadawi's Struggle for Gender Justice

Nawal El Saadawi's struggle to achieve gender justice in Egypt has been going on for years. She has been a sharp critic of gender inequality in family law, both in her writings and

in her activities as a women's activist. El Saadawi has gone through personal experiences as a woman in Egypt limited by patriarchal rules in family law. She has fought this oppression by publicizing her experiences and thoughts, holding discussions and meetings with the community, and cooperating with other organizations fighting for gender equality. In her struggle, Nawal El Saadawi has gained international recognition and is revered as a feminist hero and one of the most influential figures in the gender equality movement in Egypt (Newson, 2010, p. 7).

Nawal El Saadawi, a renowned feminist and women's rights activist, has dedicated her life to challenging gender inequality in Egypt. Her writings and activism have been instrumental in bringing to light the injustices faced by women under patriarchal family laws. Drawing inspiration from her own experiences, El Saadawi has tirelessly advocated for change, engaging in community discussions, collaborating with other organizations, and publicizing her views. Her unwavering commitment has earned her international recognition as a feminist hero and a pivotal figure in Egypt's gender equality movement.

Nawal El Saadawi's Influence in the Egyptian Feminist Movement

Nawal El Saadawi had a very large and significant influence on the feminist movement in Egypt (Shehata, 2023). She not only inspired and influenced many women in the country, but also on an extraordinary level. Through her extraordinarily powerful and vivid writings, she has provided a different perspective and deepened understanding of the condition of women in Egyptian society as well as the role of family law in maintaining gender inequality (Ennin & Sam, 2023).

Not only that, Nawal El Saadawi has also paved the way and laid a strong foundation for other women to speak out and play an active role in the feminist movement. In an effort to fight for their rights, she has established various organizations and institutions focused on the protection and empowerment of women, as well as advocating for gender equality. In the course of time, Nawal El Saadawi's influence in the Egyptian feminist movement is still strongly felt. Her incredible works and inspiring ideas have transcended boundaries and remain an important resource for women's struggle to achieve absolute gender justice. In Nawal El Saadawi's courage and perseverance, many women saw and found inspiration and role models for those who also fought for equality and justice (Neal-Stanley, 2024).

With all her achievements and passionate approach, Nawal El Saadawi continues to be a source of inspiration for many women around the world who are fighting for their rights. Her presence has ignited a flame of change that will never be extinguished, and her legacy within the feminist movement remains relevant and powerful today. The spirit of Nawal El Saadawi lights the way for women who want to pursue their dreams and demand true gender justice.

Nawal El Saadawi's Analysis of Egyptian Family Law

Nawal El Saadawi carefully analyzed Egypt's family law system, identified a number of related issues, and raised some existing unfair assumptions between husband and wife (El Saadawi, 2017b). In her analysis, she highlights that the process of marriage, divorce, and the regulation of family rights tend to favor men over women. Saadawi, as a staunch feminist, firmly opposed polygamy, which ultimately promoted gender inequality and harmed the position of women in society (Toman, 2024).

Through this in-depth analysis, Saadawi unequivocally reveals and proves how important it is to make significant changes and reforms in family law to provide proper protection and equality for women in Egypt and fight for the rights of those who have long been neglected and marginalized. Thus, El Saadawi's thoughts and analysis have given a call to all elements of society to unite and move forward towards an indispensable and awaited change in Egypt's family law system. In this context, it should be emphasized that the struggle to achieve gender equality and fair protection for women must be a top priority for the Egyptian nation. In the face of these challenges, it is important for all parties to acknowledge and address the reality that the current family law system has created structural injustices that cripple women's progress and well-being.

Moving forward, concrete steps are needed to change the paradigm of male domination to equal rights and protection for all individuals, not only in the context of marriage and divorce (Khoiruddin, 2001) but also in terms of financial arrangements, inheritance rights, and child custody. Such transformation cannot be ignored or delayed any longer because equal rights and protection are human rights that must be obtained by every individual, regardless of gender.

Therefore, if Egypt is truly to move forward as a just and inclusive country, comprehensive and progressive changes in family law must be a priority. This will involve

reforming a legal system that promotes equality, protects women from violence and discrimination, and guarantees them fair and equal rights (El-Saadawi, 2017c). All Egyptians have a moral and social responsibility to support this change. As Egyptians, they must unite and fight against the systematic injustices that have destroyed the potential and dignity of many women in this country. Together, Egyptians can bring about positive change and realize the dream of equality that many women have always wanted (Thampy, 2021). El Saadawi encouraged Egyptians to join hands and fight against gender injustice in order to create a better and just future for all individuals in Egypt. El Saadawi has embarked on this change with her in-depth analysis. Now, it is the Egyptians' duty to continue this struggle until achieving a true vision of equality and an inclusive family law system in their beloved country.

Nawal El Saadawi's Impact on Egypt's Family Law Changes

Nawal El Saadawi's very significant impact on changing family law in Egypt cannot be underestimated. Through her incisive writings and inspiring speeches, she has driven a very significant change that cannot be ignored in family law reform. She has boldly and forcefully criticized and highlighted deeply discriminatory and unequal laws against women, which include unfair and unequal laws on marriage, divorce, and child custody (Jambunanda et al., 2023). Her sharp, clear, and impassioned critique has sparked a deep awareness among citizens and governments and has been a very important first step towards bringing about change that is far more just, equitable, inclusive, and socially just for all. In every word she writes, in every word she speaks, Nawal El Saadawi has marked her courage and decisiveness in fighting for equality and justice in family law in Egypt. Her monumental legacy of struggle will live on to inspire and inspire ambitious future generations to bring about more just, equal and progressive change in the Egyptian's struggling world (Shehata, 2023).

El Saadawi's positive influence on family law reform is undeniable. Her persistent action against injustice has stimulated thought and awakened the spirit of change in Egyptian society. El Saadawi has transcended existing boundaries and questioned unjust beliefs in her remarkable works. Her sharp and forceful criticism of gender inequality in marriage, divorce, and child custody has forced governments and societies to reconsider their patriarchal views. She has been a voice for millions of women who are unfairly treated and has raised concerns

about the need for change. In her passionate and impassioned words, El Saadawi has marked the way for socially just and inclusive change in Egypt (Shehata, 2023).

Her legacy will continue to influence and inspire future generations to fight for equality and justice in family law. El Saadawi's brilliance and perseverance in fighting injustice will continue to be a source of inspiration for those with high ambitions to create a more just, equal, and progressive world.

Future Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality in Egypt

The future of achieving gender equality in Egypt still faces several complex challenges that require serious attention. First, obstacles in the implementation of family law changes are one of the things that need to be overcome effectively and sustainably. Although some legal amendments have been made to reduce gender inequality, further efforts are needed to ensure that these laws are actually implemented and produce real changes in everyday life. This requires close cooperation between governments, legal institutions, and civil society organizations (Shehata, 2023).

In addition, the role of society is also an important factor in promoting gender equality in Egypt. Despite efforts by activists and legal changes, gender equality will not be achieved without the support and active participation of the wider community. Public education and awareness about the importance of gender equality must continue to be improved through effective campaigns and participation in gender strengthening programs at all levels (El Saadawi, 2017c).

In the context of the future challenge of achieving gender equality in Egypt, it should be noted that family law changes that are still discriminatory against women, such as in divorce, polygamy, and livelihood proceedings, are one of the main obstacles. El Saadawi's criticism of the still strong patriarchal culture in Egyptian society also demonstrates the need for cultural transformation to better gender equality (Shaw, 2023). In addition, the active participation of women in the process of formulating family law policies is also crucial in addressing these challenges and ensuring better representation of women's interests in legislative reform.

Cases that reflect gender inequalities in family law in Egypt

In Egypt, there are several cases that reflect gender inequality in family law. One case that is quite controversial is the divorce case. Many women have difficulty obtaining their

rights in divorce, such as child custody and livelihood (El Saadawi, 2017b). In addition, cases of polygamy are also a problem that often arises. Family law in Egypt allows men to have more than one wife, which can increase injustice against women. The issue of ownership of inherited property is also an important issue in this study. Women often do not inherit fairly compared to men. All these cases show that gender inequality is still a problem in Egyptian family law and poses a challenge for women in seeking justice (Shehata, 2023).

Gender inequality in family law in Egypt has become an issue that continues to receive attention from various parties. Many women struggle to get justice in divorce, but still face many obstacles. They have to fight hard to obtain child custody and the income they should have earned easily. In addition, the issue of polygamy continues to be a hot debate in Egyptian society. Many highlighted that legal policies that allow men to have more than one wife can result in injustice against women (Wahib, 2014a).

Gender inequalities in family law in Egypt are an issue that continues to attract attention from various parties. Women in Egypt struggle for justice in divorce and custody but still face many obstacles (Demery, 2023). They have to fight hard to get the rights they should get easily. Besides, the issue of polygamy has also been a hot debate in Egyptian society, with many highlighting that legal policies that allow men to have more than one wife can lead to injustice towards women. All these cases only underscore that gender inequality still affects women in seeking justice within Egypt's family law system. These challenges faced by women must not be ignored, and concrete action must be taken to create positive change. Family law should be able to provide protection and equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their sex. Only by addressing gender inequality can we achieve true justice in an advanced Egyptian society.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reaffirm the structural and systemic gender inequalities embedded in Egyptian family law, particularly concerning divorce, polygamy, *bait at tho'ah*, livelihoods, and *hadhanah*. El Saadawi's critiques illuminate the entrenched patriarchal norms that sustain these injustices, revealing the deep-seated legal, social, and cultural barriers that continue to disadvantage women. The study underscores the urgent need for reform by illustrating how Egyptian family law perpetuates gender-based discrimination and by emphasizing the role of feminist scholars and activists in advocating for change. The research

highlights that El-Saadawi's intellectual contributions and activism have provided a crucial foundation for understanding and addressing gender disparities within the legal framework. Her insistence on religious reinterpretation, freedom of thought, and economic independence for women emerges as a pivotal strategy in the ongoing struggle for gender equality. By analyzing these aspects, this study provides a critical lens through which the oppressive mechanisms of Egyptian family law can be deconstructed and challenged.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both feminist legal theory and gender studies, as it extends previous discussions on the intersection of law, power, and gender inequality. It positions El Saadawi's work within the broader discourse of legal reforms in Muslim-majority countries and offers new insights into the role of feminist activism in shaping family law. The study advances the understanding of how patriarchal legal structures continue to limit women's rights and autonomy despite various reform efforts. It also strengthens the argument that sustainable legal change requires both legislative amendments and shifts in societal perceptions of gender roles. Furthermore, by situating Egyptian family law in a comparative framework, this research demonstrates that similar struggles for legal gender equality exist across different contexts, reinforcing the global relevance of feminist critiques of family law. The study's findings serve as a foundation for policymakers, legal practitioners, and gender justice advocates in their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable legal system.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges certain limitations, primarily related to the reliance on secondary data and the lack of direct engagement with legal practitioners and activists currently working on family law reform in Egypt. Future research should incorporate empirical studies involving in-depth interviews with scholars, policymakers, and affected individuals to provide a more nuanced understanding of the lived realities of gender discrimination within the legal system. Additionally, further comparative analyses with other Muslim-majority countries undergoing legal reforms could enrich discussions on best practices for achieving gender justice within Islamic legal frameworks. Moving forward, sustained advocacy, interdisciplinary collaboration, and grassroots activism will be essential in ensuring that family law evolves to reflect principles of justice and equality, which are in line with the transformative vision championed by Nawal El Saadawi.

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